PRO
VERITATE
ET
REGNO
DEI
CHARLES HOLBROOK LIBRARY
Pacific School of Religion

J. Punchard Esq^r
from his obliged &
affectionate friend
J. Newman

HOLBROOK LIBRARY
PACIFIC SCHOOL
OF RELIGION

HOLBROOK LIBRARY
PACIFIC SCHOOL
OF RELIGION

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026 with funding from
Graduate Theological Union

BL
253
.C43
1853

https://archive.org/details/discoursesonchri00chal_1

DISCOURSES

ON THE

CHRISTIAN REVELATION

VIEWED IN CONNEXION

WITH THE MODERN ASTRONOMY,

TOGETHER

WITH SIX SERMONS EMBRACING THE LAST OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH

OF THE

Princess Charlotte of Wales.

BY

REV. THOMAS CHALMERS, D. D.

Minister of the Tron Church Glasgow.

ANDOVER:

PUBLISHED BY MARK NEWMAN.

Flagg & Gould, printers.

1818.

76174

RF25.4
C353

HOLBROOK LIBRARY
PACIFIC SCHOOL OF RELIGION

PREFACE.

THE astronomical objection against the truth of the Gospel does not occupy a very prominent place in any of our Treatises of Infidelity. It is often, however, met with in conversation—and we have known it to be the cause of serious perplexity and alarm in minds anxious for the solid establishment of their religious faith.

There is an imposing splendour in the science of astronomy; and it is not to be wondered at, if the light it throws, or appears to throw, over other tracks of speculation than those which are properly its own, should at times dazzle and mislead an inquirer. On this account we think it were a service to what we deem a true and a righteous cause, could we succeed in dissipating this illusion; and in stripping Infidelity of those pretensions to enlargement, and to a certain air of philosophical greatness, by which it has often become so destructively alluring to the young, and the ardent, and the ambitious.

In my first Discourse, I have attempted a sketch of the Modern Astronomy—nor have I wished to throw any disguise over that comparative littleness which belongs to our planet, and which gives to the argument of Freethinkers all its plausibility.

This argument involves in it an assertion and an inference. The assertion is, that Christianity is a religion which professes to be designed for the single benefit of our world; and the inference is, that God cannot be the author of this religion, for he would not lavish on so insignificant a field such peculiar and such distinguishing attentions as are ascribed to him in the Old and New Testament.

Christianity makes no such profession. That it is designed for the single benefit of our world, is altogether a presumption of the Infidel himself—and feeling that this is not the only ex-

ample of temerity which can be charged on the enemies of our faith, I have allotted my second Discourse to the attempt of demonstrating the utter repugnance of such a spirit with the cautious and enlightened philosophy of modern times.

In the course of this Sermon I have offered a tribute of acknowledgment to the theology of Sir Isaac Newton; and in such terms, as if not farther explained, may be liable to misconstruction. The grand circumstance of applause in the character of this great man, is, that unseduced by all the magnificence of his own discoveries, he had a solidity of mind which could resist their fascination, and keep him in steady attachment to that book whose general evidences stamped upon it the impress of a real communication from heaven. This was the sole attribute of his theology which I had in my eye when I presumed to eulogise it. I do not think, that, amid the distraction and the engrossment of his other pursuits, he has at all times succeeded in his interpretation of the book; else he would never, in my apprehension, have abetted the leading doctrine of a sect, or a system, which has now nearly dwindled away from public observation.

In my third Discourse I am silent as to the assertion, and attempt to combat the inference that is founded on it. I insist, that upon all the analogies of nature and of providence, we can lay no limit on the condescension of God, or on the multiplicity of his regards even to the very humblest departments of creation; and that it is not for us, who see the evidences of divine wisdom and care spread in such exhaustless profusion around us, to say, that the Deity would not lavish all the wealth of his wondrous attributes on the salvation even of our solitary species.

At this point of the argument I trust that the intelligent reader may be enabled to perceive in the adversaries of the gospel, a twofold dereliction from the maxims of the Baconian philosophy; that, in the first instance, the assertion which forms the groundwork of their argument, is gratuitously fetched out of an unknown region where they are utterly abandoned by the light of experience; and that, in the second instance, the inference they urge from it, is in the face of manifold and undeniable truths, all lying within the safe and accessible field of human observation.

In my subsequent Discourses, I proceed to the informations of the record. The Infidel objection, drawn from astronomy, may be considered as by this time disposed of; and if we have succeeded in clearing it away, so as to deliver the christian testimony from all discredit upon this ground, then may we submit, on the strength of other evidences, to be guided by its information. We shall thus learn, that Christianity has a far more extensive bearing on the other orders of creation than the Infidel is disposed to allow; and whether he will own the authority of this information or not, he will, at least, be forced to admit, that the subject matter of the Bible itself is not chargeable with that objection which he has attempted to fasten upon it.

Thus had my only object been the refutation of the Infidel argument, I might have spared the last Discourses of the Volume altogether. But the tracts of Scriptural information to which they directed me, I considered as worthy of prosecution on their own account—and I do think, that much may be gathered from these less observed portions of the field of revelation, to cheer, and to elevate, and to guide the believer.

But, in the management of such a discussion as this, though for a great degree of this effect it would require to be conducted in a far higher style than I am able to sustain, the taste of the human mind may be regaled, and its understanding put into a state of the most agreeable exercise. Now, this is quite distinct from the conscience being made to feel the force of a personal application; nor could I either bring this argument to its close in the pulpit, or offer it to the general notice of the world, without adverting, in the last Discourse, to a delusion which I fear, is carrying forward thousands, and tens of thousands to an undone eternity.

I have closed the Volume with an Appendix of Scriptural authorities. I found that I could not easily interweave them in the texture of the Work, and have, therefore, thought fit to present them in a separate form. I look for a twofold benefit from this exhibition—first, on those more general readers, who are ignorant of the Scriptures, and of the riches and variety which abound in them—and, secondly, on those narrow and intolerant professors, who take an alarm at the very sound and semblance of philoso-

phy, and feel as if there was an utter irreconcileable antipathy between its lessons on the one hand, and the soundness and piety of the Bible on the other. It were well I conceive, for our cause, that the latter could become a little more indulgent on this subject; that they gave up a portion of those ancient and hereditary prepossessions, which go so far to cramp and to enthral them; that they would suffer theology to take that wide range of argument and of illustration which belongs to her; and that, less sensitively jealous of any desecration being brought upon the Sabbath, or the pulpit, they would suffer her freely to announce all those truths, which either serve to protect Christianity from the contempt of science, or to protect the teachers of christianity from those invasions which are practised both on the sacredness of the office, and on the solitudes of its devotional and intellectual labours.

I shall only add, for the information of readers at a distance, that these Discourses were chiefly delivered on the occasion of the week-day sermon that is preached in rotation by the Ministers of Glasgow.

CONTENTS.

DISCOURSE I.

A sketch of the Modern Astronomy.

Page

"When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?"—PSALM viii. 3, 4..... 9

DISCOURSE II.

The modesty of true science.

"And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know."—1 COR. viii. 2..... 32

DISCOURSE III.

On the extent of the Divine Condescension.

"Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high; Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth!" —PSALM cxiii. 5, 6..... 54

DISCOURSE IV.

On the knowledge of man's moral history in the distant places of creation.

"Which things the angels desire to look into."—1 PETER i. 12..... 73

DISCOURSE V.

On the sympathy that is felt for man in the distant places of creation.

"I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance."—LUKE xv. 7..... 93

DISCOURSE VI.

On the contest for an ascendency over man, among the higher orders of intelligence.

"And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it."—COL. ii. 15..... 110

DISCOURSE VII.

On the slender influence of mere taste and sensibility in matters of religion.

"And, lo! thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear thy words, but they do them not."—EZEKIEL xxxiii. 32..... 126

Appendix..... 150

OCCASIONAL SERMONS.

I.

A sermon before the Society for the relief of the destitute sick.

"Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble."—PSALM xli. 1..... 163

II.

Thoughts on Universal Peace.

"Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."—ISAIAH xi. 4..... 191

III.

The duty of giving an immediate diligence to the business of the Christian Life.

An Address to the inhabitants of the Parish of Kilmany..... 219

IV.

The influence of Bible Societies on the temporal necessities of the poor..... 266

V.

A sermon preached before the Society in Scotland for propagating christian knowledge.

"And Nathaniel said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see."—JOHN i. 46..... 287

VI.

A Sermon delivered on the day of the funeral of the Princess Charlotte of Wales.

"For when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness."—ISAIAH xxvi. 9..... 317

DISCOURSE I.

A SKETCH OF THE MODERN ASTRONOMY.

"*When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him.*"—PSALM viii. 3, 4.

IN the reasonings of the Apostle Paul, we cannot fail to observe how studiously he accommodates his arguments to the pursuits, or principles, or prejudices of the people whom he was addressing. He often made a favourite opinion of their own the starting point of his explanation; and educing a dexterous but irresistible train of argument from some principle upon which each of the parties had a common understanding, did he force them out of all their opposition, by a weapon of their own choosing—nor did he scruple to avail himself of a Jewish peculiarity, or a heathen superstition, or a quotation from Greek poetry, by which he might gain the attention of those whom he laboured to convince, and by the skillful application of which, he might "shut them up unto the faith."

Now, when Paul was thus addressing one class of an assembly or congregation, another class might, for the

time, have been shut out of all direct benefit and application from his arguments. When he wrote an Epistle to a mixed assembly of Christianised Jews and Gentiles, he had often to direct such a process of argument to the former, as the latter would neither require nor comprehend. Now, what should have been the conduct of the Gentiles at the reading of that part of the Epistle which bore almost an exclusive reference to the Jews? Should it be impatience at the hearing of something for which they had no relish or understanding? Should it be a fretful disappointment, because every thing that was said, was not said for their edification? Should it be angry discontent with the Apostle, because, leaving them in the dark, he had brought forward nothing for them, through the whole extent of so many successive chapters? Some of them may have felt in this way; but surely it would have been vastly more Christian to have sat with meek and unfeigned patience, and to have rejoiced that the great Apostle had undertaken the management of those obstinate prejudices, which kept back so many human beings from the participation of the Gospel. And should Paul have had reason to rejoice, that, by the success of his arguments, he had reconciled one or any number of Jews to Christianity, then it was the part of these Gentiles, though receiving no direct or personal benefit from the arguments, to have blessed God, and rejoiced along with him.

Conceive that Paul were at this moment alive, and zealously engaged in the work of pressing the Christian religion on the acceptance of the various classes of society. Should he not still have acted on the principle of being all things to all men? Should he not have accommodated his discussion to the prevailing taste, and literature, and philosophy of the times? Should he not have closed with the people, whom he was addressing, on some favourite principle of their own; and, in the prosecution

of this principle, might he not have got completely beyond the comprehension of a numerous class of zealous, humble, and devoted Christians? Now, the question is not, how these would conduct themselves in such circumstances? but how should they do it? Would it be right in them to sit with impatience, because the argument of the Apostles contained in it nothing in the way of comfort or edification to themselves? Should not the benevolence of the Gospel give a different direction to their feelings? And, instead of that narrow, exclusive, and monopolizing spirit, which I fear is too characteristic of the more declared professors of the truth as it is in Jesus, ought they not to be patient, and to rejoice; when to philosophers, and to men of literary accomplishment, and to those who have the direction of the public taste among the upper walks of society, such arguments are addressed as may bring home to their acceptance also, "the words of this life?" It is under the impulse of these considerations, that I have, with some hesitation, prevailed upon myself to attempt an argument which I think fitted to soften and subdue those prejudices which lie at the bottom of what may be called the infidelity of natural science; if possible to bring over to the humility of the Gospel, those who expatiate with delight on the wonders and sublimities of creation; and to convince them that a loftier wisdom still than that even of their high and honourable acquirements, is the wisdom of him who is resolved to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

It is truly a most Christian exercise, to extract a sentiment of piety from the works and the appearances of nature. It has the authority of the Sacred Writers upon its side, and even our Saviour himself gives it the weight and the solemnity of his example. "Behold the lilies of the field; they toil not, neither do they spin, yet your heavenly Father careth for them." He expatiates on the

beauty of a single flower, and draws from it the delightful argument of confidence in God. He gives us to see that taste may be combined with piety, and that the same heart may be occupied with all that is serious in the contemplations of religion, and be at the same time alive to the charms and the loveliness of nature.

The Psalmist takes a still loftier flight. He leaves the world, and lifts his imagination to that mighty expanse which spreads above it and around it. He wings his way through space, and wanders in thought over its immeasurable regions. Instead of a dark and unpeopled solitude, he sees it crowded with splendour, and filled with the energy of the Divine presence. Creation rises in its immensity before him, and the world, with all which it inherits, shrinks into littleness at a contemplation so vast and so overpowering. He wonders that he is not overlooked amid the grandeur and the variety which are on every side of him, and passing upward from the majesty of nature to the majesty of nature's Architect, he exclaims, "What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou shouldest deign to visit him?"

It is not for us to say, whether inspiration revealed to the Psalmist the wonders of the modern astronomy. But even though the mind be a perfect stranger to the science of these enlightened times, the heavens present a great and an elevating spectacle, an immense concave reposing upon the circular boundary of the world, and the innumerable lights which are suspended from on high, moving with solemn regularity along its surface. It seems to have been at night that the piety of the Psalmist was awakened by this contemplation, when the moon and the stars were visible, and not when the sun had risen in his strength, and thrown a splendour around him, which bore down and eclipsed all the lesser glories of the firmament.

And there is much in the scenery of a nocturnal sky, to lift the soul to pious contemplation. That moon, and these stars, what are they? They are detached from the world, and they lift you above it. You feel withdrawn from the earth, and rise in lofty abstraction above this little theatre of human passions and human anxieties. The mind abandons itself to reverie, and is tranferred in the ecstacy of its thoughts, to distant and unexplored regions. It sees nature in the simplicity of her great elements, and it sees the God of nature invested with the high attributes of wisdom and majesty.

But what can these lights be? The curiosity of the human mind is insatiable, and the mechanism of these wonderful heavens has, in all ages, been its subject and its employment. It has been reserved for these latter times, to resolve this great and interesting question. The sublimest powers of philosophy have been called to the exercise, and astronomy may now be looked upon as the most certain and best established of the sciences.

We all know that every visible object appears less in magnitude as it recedes from the eye. The lofty vessel as it retires from the coast, shrinks into littleness, and at last appears in the form of a small speck on the verge of the horizon. The eagle with its expanded wings, is a noble object; but when it takes its flight into the upper regions of the air, it becomes less to the eye, and is seen like a dark spot upon the vault of heaven. The same is true of all magnitude. The heavenly bodies appear small to the eye of an inhabitant of this earth, only from the immensity of their distance. When we talk of hundreds of millions of miles, it is not to be listened to as incredible. For remember that we are talking of those bodies which are scattered over the immensity of space, and that space knows no termination. The conception is great and difficult, but the truth is unquestionable. By a process of

measurement which it is unnecessary at present to explain, we have ascertained first the distance, and then the magnitude of some of those bodies which roll in the firmament; that the sun, which presents itself to the eye under so diminutive a form, is really a globe, exceeding, by many thousands of times, the dimensions of the earth which we inhabit; that the moon itself has the magnitude of a world; and that even a few of those stars, which appear like so many lucid points to the unassisted eye of the observer, expand into large circles upon the application of the telescope, and are some of them much larger than the ball which we tread upon, and to which we proudly apply the denomination of the universe.

Now, what is the fair and obvious presumption? The world in which we live, is a round ball of a determined magnitude, and occupies its own place in the firmament. But when we explore the unlimited tracts of that space, which is every where around us, we meet with other balls of equal or superior magnitude, and from which our earth would either be invisible, or appear as small as any of those twinkling stars which are seen on the canopy of heaven. Why then suppose that this little spot, little at least in the immensity which surrounds it, should be the exclusive abode of life and of intelligence? What reason to think that those mightier globes which roll in other parts of creation, and which we have discovered to be worlds in magnitude, are not also worlds in use and in dignity? Why should we think that the great Architect of nature, supreme in wisdom as he is in power, would call these stately mansions into existence, and leave them unoccupied? When we cast our eye over the broad sea, and look at the country on the other side, we see nothing but the blue land stretching obscurely over the distant horizon. We are too far away to perceive the richness of its scenery, or to hear the sound of its population.

Why not extend this principle to the still more distant parts of the universe? What though, from this remote point of observation, we can see nothing but the naked roundness of yon planetary orbs? Are we therefore to say, that they are so many vast and unpeopled solitudes; that desolation reigns in every part of the universe but ours; that the whole energy of the divine attributes is expended on one insignificant corner of these mighty works; and that to this earth alone belongs the bloom of vegetation, or the blessedness of life, or the dignity of rational and immortal existence?

But this is not all. We have something more than the mere magnitude of the planets to allege, in favour of the idea that they are inhabited. We know that this earth turns round upon itself; and we observe that all those celestial bodies, which are accessible to such an observation, have the same movement. We know that the earth performs a yearly revolution round the sun; and we can detect in all the planets which compose our system, a revolution of the same kind, and under the same circumstances. They have the same succession of day and night. They have the same agreeable vicissitude of the seasons. To them, light and darkness succeed each other; and the gaiety of summer is followed by the dreariness of winter. To each of them the heavens present as varied and magnificent a spectacle; and this earth the encompassing of which would require the labour of years from one of its puny inhabitants, is but one of the lesser lights which sparkle in their firmament. To them, as well as to us, has God divided the light from the darkness, and he has called the light day, and the darkness he has called night. He has said, let there be lights in the firmament of their heaven, to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and for years; and let them be for lights

in the firmament of heaven, to give lights upon their earth; and it was so. And God has also made to them great lights. To all of them he has given the sun to rule the day; and to many of them has he given moons to rule the night. To them he has made the stars also. And God has set them in the firmament of heaven, to give light unto their earth; and to rule over the day, and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness; and God has seen that it was good.

In all these greater arrangements of divine wisdom, we can see that God has done the same things for the accommodation of the planets that he has done for the earth which we inhabit. And shall we say, that the resemblance stops here, because we are not in a situation to observe it? Shall we say, that this scene of magnificence has been called into being merely for the amusement of a few astronomers? Shall we measure the counsels of heaven by the narrow impotence of the human faculties? or conceive, that silence and solitude reign throughout the mighty empire of nature; that the greater part of creation is an empty parade; and that not a worshipper of the Divinity is to be found through the wide extent of yon vast and immeasurable regions?

It lends a delightful confirmation to the argument, when, from the growing perfection of our instruments, we can discover a new point of resemblance between our earth and the other bodies of the planetary system. It is now ascertained, not merely that all of them have their day and night, and that all of them have their vicissitudes of seasons, and that some of them have their moons to rule their night and alleviate the darkness of it. We can see of one, that its surface rises into inequalities, that it swells into mountains and stretches into valleys; of another, that it is surrounded by an atmosphere which may support the respiration of animals; of a third, that clouds

are formed and suspended over it, which may minister to it all the bloom and luxuriance of vegetation; and of a fourth, that a white colour spreads over its northern regions, as its winter advances, and that on the approach of summer this whiteness is dissipated—giving room to suppose, that the element of water abounds in it, that it rises by evaporation into its atmosphere, that it freezes upon the application of cold, that it is precipitated in the form of snow, that it covers the ground with a fleecy mantle, which melts away from the heat of a more vertical sun; and that other worlds bear a resemblance to our own, in the same yearly round of beneficent and interesting changes.

Who shall assign a limit to the discoveries of future ages? Who can prescribe to science her boundaries, or restrain the active and insatiable curiosity of man within the circle of his present acquirements? We may guess with plausibility what we cannot anticipate with confidence. The day may yet be coming, when our instruments of observation shall be inconceivably more powerful. They may ascertain still more decisive points of resemblance. They may resolve the same question by the evidence of sense which is now so abundantly convincing by the evidence of analogy. They may lay open to us the unquestionable vestiges of art, and industry, and intelligence. We may see summer throwing its green mantle over these mighty tracts, and we may see them left naked and colourless after the flush of vegetation has disappeared. In the progress of years, or of centuries, we may trace the hand of cultivation spreading a new aspect over some portion of a planetary surface. Perhaps some large city, the metropolis of a mighty empire, may expand into a visible spot by the powers of some future telescope. Perhaps the glass of some observer, in a distant age, may enable him to construct the map of another

world, and to lay down the surface of it in all its minute and topical varieties. But there is no end of conjecture, and to the men of other times we leave the full assurance of what we can assert with the highest probability, that yon planetary orbs are so many worlds, that they teem with life, and that the mighty Being who presides in high authority over this scene of grandeur and astonishment, has there planted the worshippers of his glory.

Did the discoveries of science stop here, we have enough to justify the exclamation of the Psalmist, "What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou shouldest deign to visit him?" They widen the empire of creation far beyond the limits which were formerly assigned to it. They give us to see that yon sun, throned in the centre of his planetary system, gives light, and warmth, and the vicissitude of seasons, to an extent of surface, several hundreds of times greater than that of the earth which we inhabit. They lay open to us a number of worlds, rolling in their respective circles around this vast luminary—and prove, that the ball which we tread upon, with all its mighty burden of oceans and continents, instead of being distinguished from the others, is among the least of them; and, from some of the more distant planets, would not occupy a visible point in the concave of their firmament. They let us know, that though this mighty earth, with all its myriads of people, were to sink into annihilation, there are some worlds where an event so awful to us would be unnoticed and unknown, and others where it would be nothing more than the disappearance of a little star which had ceased from its twinkling. We should feel a sentiment of modesty at this just but humiliating representation. We should learn not to look on our earth as the universe of God, but one paltry and insignificant portion of it; that it is only one of the many mansions which the Supreme

Being has created for the accommodation of his worshippers, and only one of the many worlds rolling in that flood of light which the sun pours around him to the outer limits of the planetary system.

But is there nothing beyond these limits? The planetary system has its boundary, but space has none; and if we wing our fancy there, do we only travel through dark and unoccupied regions? There are only five, or at most six, of the planetary orbs visible to the naked eye. What, then, is that multitude of other lights which sparkle in our firmament, and fill the whole concave of heaven with innumerable splendours? The planets are all attached to the sun; and, in circling around him, they do homage to that influence which binds them to perpetual attendance on this great luminary. But the other stars do not own his dominion. They do not circle around him. To all common observation, they remain immoveable; and each, like the independent sovereign of his own territory, appears to occupy the same inflexible position in the regions of immensity. What can we make of them? Shall we take our adventurous flight to explore these dark and untravelled dominions? What mean these innumerable fires lighted up in distant parts of the universe? Are they only made to shed a feeble glimmering over this little spot in the kingdom of nature? or do they serve a purpose worthier of themselves, to light up other worlds, and give animation to other systems.

The first thing which strikes a scientific observer of the fixed stars, is their immeasurable distance. If the whole planetary system were lighted up into a globe of fire, it would exceed, by many millions of times, the magnitude of this world, and yet only appear a small lucid point from the nearest of them. If a body were projected from the sun with the velocity of a cannon-ball, it would take hundreds of thousands of years before it described

that mighty interval which separates the nearest of the fixed stars from our sun and from our system. If this earth, which moves at more than the inconceivable velocity of a million and a half miles a day, were to be hurried from its orbit, and to take the same rapid flight over this immense tract, it would not have arrived at the termination of its journey, after taking all the time which has elapsed since the creation of the world. These are great numbers, and great calculations, and the mind feels its own impotency in attempting to grasp them. We can state them in words. We can exhibit them in figures. We can demonstrate them by the powers of a most rigid and infallible geometry. But no human fancy can summon up a lively or an adequate conception—can roam in its ideal flight over this immeasurable largeness—can take in this mighty space in all its grandeur, and in all its immensity—can sweep the outer boundaries of such a creation—or lift itself up to the majesty of that great and invisible arm, on which all is suspended.

But what can those stars be which are seated so far beyond the limits of our planetary system? They must be masses of immense magnitude, or they could not be seen at the distance of place which they occupy. The light which they give must proceed from themselves, for the feeble reflection of light from some other quarter, would not carry through such mighty tracts to the eye of an observer. A body may be visible in two ways. It may be visible from its own light, as the flame of a candle, or the brightness of a fire, or the brilliancy of yonder glorious sun, which lightens all below, and is the lamp of the world. Or it may be visible from the light which falls upon it, as the body which receives its light from the taper that falls upon it—or the whole assemblage of objects on the surface of the earth, which appear only when the light of day rests upon them—or the moon, which,

in that part of it which is towards the sun, gives out a silvery whiteness to the eye of the observer, while the other part forms a black and invisible space in the firmament—or as the planets, which shine only because the sun shines upon them, and which, each of them, present the appearance of a dark spot on the side that is turned away from it. Now apply this question to the fixed stars. Are they luminous of themselves, or do they derive their light from the sun, like the bodies of our planetary system? Think of their immense distance, and the solution of this question becomes evident. The sun, like any other body, must dwindle into a less apparent magnitude as you retire from it. At the prodigious distance even of the very nearest of the fixed stars, it must have shrunk into a small indivisible point. In short, it must have become a star itself, and could shed no more light than a single individual of those glimmering myriads, the whole assemblage of which cannot dissipate, and can scarcely alleviate the midnight darkness of our world. These stars are visible to us, not because the sun shines upon them, but because they shine of themselves, because they are so many luminous bodies scattered over the tracts of immensity—in a word, because they are so many suns, each throned in the centre of his own dominions, and pouring a flood of light over his own portion of these unlimitable regions.

At such an immense distance for observation, it is not to be supposed, that we can collect many points of resemblance between the fixed stars, and the solar star which forms the centre of our planetary system. There is one point of resemblance, however, which has not escaped the penetration of our astronomers. We know that our sun turns round upon himself, in a regular period of time. We also know, that there are dark spots scattered over his surface, which, though invisible to the naked eye, are

perfectly noticeable by our instruments. If these spots existed in greater quantity upon one side than upon another, it would have the general effect of making that side darker, and the revolution of the sun must, in such a case, give us a brighter and a fainter side, by regular alternations. Now, there are some of the fixed stars which present this appearance. They present us with periodical variations of light. From the splendour of a star of the first or second magnitude, they fade away into some of the inferior magnitudes—and one, by becoming invisible might give reason to apprehend that we had lost him altogether—but we can still recognize him by the telescope, till at length he re-appears in his own place, and, after a regular lapse of so many days and hours, recovers his original brightness. Now, the fair inference from this is, that the fixed stars, as they resemble our sun in being so many luminous masses of immense magnitude, they resemble him in this also, that each of them turns round upon his own axis; so that if any of them should have an inequality in the brightness of their sides, this revolution is rendered evident, by the regular variations in the degree of light which it undergoes.

Shall we say, then, of these vast luminaries, that they were created in vain? Were they called into existence for no other purpose than to throw a tide of useless splendour over the solitudes of immensity? Our sun is only one of these luminaries, and we know that he has worlds in his train. Why should we strip the rest of this princely attendance? Why may not each of them be the centre of his own system, and give light to his own worlds? It is true that we see them not, but could the eye of man take its flight into those distant regions, it should lose sight of our little world, before it reached the outer limits of our system—the greater planets should disappear in their turn—before it had described a small portion of that

abyss which separates us from the fixed stars, the sun should decline into a little spot, and all its splendid retinue of worlds be lost in the obscurity of distance—he should, at last, shrink into a small indivisible atom, and all that could be seen of this magnificent system, should be reduced to the glimmering of a little star. Why resist any longer the grand and interesting conclusion? Each of these stars may be the token of a system as vast and as splendid as the one which we inhabit. Worlds roll in these distant regions; and these worlds must be the mansions of life and intelligence. In yon gilded canopy of heaven we see the broad aspect of the universe, where each shining point presents us with a sun, and each sun with a system of worlds—where the Divinity reigns in all the grandeur of his attributes—where he peoples immensity with his wonders; and travels in the greatness of his strength through the dominions of one vast and unlimited monarchy.

The contemplation has no limits. If we ask the number of suns and of systems, the unassisted eye of man can take in a thousand, and the best telescope which the genius of man has constructed can take in eighty millions. But why subject the dominions of the universe to the eye of man, or to the powers of his genius? Fancy may take its flight far beyond the ken of eye or of telescope. It may expiate in the outer regions of all that is visible—and shall we have the boldness to say, that there is nothing there? that the wonders of the Almighty are at an end, because we can no longer trace his footsteps? that his omnipotence is exhausted, because human art can no longer follow him? that the creative energy of God has sunk into repose, because the imagination is enfeebled by the magnitude of its efforts, and can keep no longer on the wing through those mighty tracts, which shoot far beyond what eye hath seen, or the heart of man hath con-

ceived—which sweep endlessly along, and merge into an awful and mysterious infinity ?

Before bringing to a close this rapid and imperfect sketch of our modern astronomy, it may be right to advert to two points of interesting speculation, both of which serve to magnify our conceptions of the universe, and, of course, to give us a more affecting sense of the comparative insignificance of this our world. The first is suggested by the consideration, that, if a body be struck in the direction of its centre, it obtains, from this course, a progressive motion, but without any movement of revolution being at the same time impressed upon it. It simply goes forward, but does not turn round upon itself. But, again, should the stroke not be in the direction of the centre—should the line which joins the point of percussion to the centre, make an angle with that line in which the impulse was communicated, then the body is both made to go forward in space, and also to wheel upon its axis. In this way, each of our planets may have had their compound motion communicated to it by one single impulse ; and, on the other hand, if ever the rotatory motion be communicated by one blow, then the progressive motion must go along with it. In order to have the first motion without the second, there must be a twofold force applied to the body in opposite directions. It must be set agoing in the same way as a spinning-top, so as to revolve about an axis, and to keep unchanged its situation in space. The planets have both motions ; and, therefore, may have received them by one and the same impulse. The sun, we are certain, has one of these motions. He has a movement of revolution. If spun round his axis by two opposite forces, one on each side of him, he may have this movement, and retain an inflexible position in space. But, if this movement was given him by one stroke, he must have a progressive motion, along with a whirling motion ;

or, in other words, he is moving forward; he is describing a tract in space; and, in so doing, he carries all his planets and all their secondaries along with him.

But at this stage of the argument, the matter only remains a conjectural point of speculation. The sun may have had his rotation impressed upon him by a spinning impulse; or, without recurring to secondary causes at all, this movement may be coeval with his being, and he may have derived both the one and the other from an immediate fiat of the Creator. But, there is an actually observed phenomenon of the heavens, which advances the conjecture into a probability. In the course of ages, the stars in one quarter of the celestial sphere are apparently receding from each other; and in the opposite quarter, they are apparently drawing nearer to each other. If the sun be approaching the former quarter, and receding from the latter, this phenomenon admits of an easy explanation, and we are furnished with a magnificent step in the scale of the Creator's workmanship. In the same manner as the planets, with their satellites, revolve round the sun, may the sun, with all his tributaries, be moving, in common with other stars, around some distant centre, from which there emanates an influence to bind and to subordinate them all. They may be kept from approaching each other, by a centrifugal force; without which, the laws of attraction might consolidate, into one stupendous mass, all the distinct globes of which the universe is composed. Our sun may, therefore, be only one member of a higher family—taking his part, along with millions of others, in some loftier system of mechanism, by which they are all subjected to one law, and to one arrangement—describing the sweep of such an orbit in space, and completing the mighty revolution in such a period of time, as to reduce our planetary seasons and our planetary movements, to a very humble and fractionary rank in the scale of a high-

er astronomy. There is room for all this in immensity; and there is even argument for all this, in the records of actual observation; and, from the whole of this speculation, do we gather a new emphasis to the lesson, how minute is the place, and how secondary is the importance of our world, amid the glories of such a surrounding magnificence!

But, there is still another very interesting tract of speculation, which has been opened up to us by the more recent observations of astronomy. What we allude to, is the discovery of the *nebulæ*. We allow that it is but a dim and indistinct light which this discovery has thrown upon the structure of the universe; but still it has spread before the eye of the mind a field of very wide and lofty contemplation. Anterior to this discovery, the universe might appear to have been composed of an indefinite number of suns, about equi-distant from each other, uniformly scattered over space, and each encompassed by such a planetary attendance as takes place in our own system. But, we have now reason to think, that, instead of lying uniformly, and in a state of equi-distance from each other, they are arranged into distinct clusters—that, in the same manner as the distance of the nearest fixed stars, so inconceivably superior to that of our planets from each other, marks the separation of the solar systems, so the distance of two contiguous clusters may be so inconceivably superior to the reciprocal distance of those fixed stars which belong to the same cluster, as to mark an equally distinct separation of the clusters, and to constitute each of them an individual member of some higher and more extended arrangement. This carries us upwards through another ascending step in the scale of magnificence, and there leaves us wildering in the uncertainty, whether even here the wonderful progression is ended; and at all events fixes the assured conclusion in our minds, that, to an eye which could spread itself over the whole, the mansion

which accomodates our species might be so very small as to lie wrapped in microscopical concealment; and, in reference to the only Being who possesses this universal eye, well might we say, "What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou shouldest deign to visit him?"

And, after all, though it be a mighty and difficult conception, yet who can question it? What is seen may be nothing to what is unseen; for what is seen is limited by the range of our instruments. What is unseen has no limit; and, though all which the eye of man can take in, or his fancy can grasp at, were swept away, there might still remain as ample a field, over which the Divinity may expatiate, and which he may have peopled with innumerable worlds. If the whole visible creation were to disappear, it would leave a solitude behind it—but to the infinite Mind, that can take in the whole system of nature, this solitude might be nothing; a small unoccupied point in that immensity which surrounds it, and which he may have filled with the wonders of his omnipotence. Though this earth were to be burned up, though the trumpet of its dissolution were sounded, though yon sky were to pass away as a scroll, and every visible glory, which the finger of the Divinity has inscribed on it, were to be put out for ever—an event so awful to us, and to every world in our vicinity, by which so many suns would be extinguished, and so many varied scenes of life and of population would rush into forgetfulness—what is it in the high scale of the Almighty's workmanship? a mere shred, which, though scattered into nothing, would leave the universe of God one entire scene of greatness and of majesty. Though this earth, and these heavens, were to disappear, there are other worlds, which roll afar; the light of other suns shines upon them; and the sky which mantles them, is garnished with other stars. Is it presumption to say, that

the moral world extends to these distant and unknown regions? that they are occupied with people? that the charities of home and of neighbourhood flourish there? that the praises of God are there lifted up, and his goodness rejoiced in? that piety has its temples and its offerings? and the richness of the divine attributes is there felt and admired by intelligent worshippers?

And what is this world in the immensity which teems with them—and what are they who occupy it? The universe at large would suffer as little, in its splendour and variety, by the destruction of our planet, as the verdure and sublime magnitude of a forest would suffer by the fall of a single leaf. The leaf quivers on the branch which supports it. It lies at the mercy of the slightest accident. A breath of wind tears it from its stem, and it lights on the stream of water which passes underneath. In a moment of time, the life, which we know, by the microscope, it teems with, is extinguished; and, an occurrence so insignificant in the eye of man, and on the scale of his observation, carries in it, to the myriads which people this little leaf, an event as terrible and as decisive as the destruction of a world. Now, on the grand scale of the universe, we, the occupiers of this ball, which performs its little round among the suns and the systems that astronomy has unfolded—we may feel the same littleness, and the same insecurity. We differ from the leaf only in this circumstance, that it would require the operation of greater elements to destroy us. But these elements exist. The fire which rages within, may lift its devouring energy to the surface of our planet, and transform it into one wide and wasting volcano. The sudden formation of elastic matter in the bowels of the earth—and it lies within the agency of known substances to accomplish this—may explode it into fragments. The exhalation of noxious air from below, may impart a virulence to the air that

is around us; it may affect the delicate proportion of its ingredients; and the whole of animated nature may wither and die under the malignity of a tainted atmosphere. A blazing comet may cross this fated planet in its orbit, and realize all the terrors which superstition has conceived of it. We cannot anticipate with precision the consequences of an event which every astronomer must know to lie within the limits of chance and probability. It may hurry our globe towards the sun—or drag it to the outer regions of the planetary system; or give it a new axis of revolution—and the effect, which I shall simply announce, without explaining it, would be to change the place of the ocean, and bring another mighty flood upon our islands and continents. These are changes which may happen in a single instant of time, and against which nothing known in the present system of things provides us with any security. They might not annihilate the earth, but they would unpeople it; and we who tread its surface with such firm and assured footsteps, are at the mercy of devouring elements, which, if let loose upon us by the hand of the Almighty, would spread solitude, and silence, and death, over the dominions of the world.

Now, it is this littleness, and this insecurity which make the protection of the Almighty so dear to us, and bring, with such emphasis, to every pious bosom, the holy lessons of humility and gratitude. The God who sitteth above, and presides in high authority over all worlds, is mindful of man; and, though at this moment his energy is felt in the remotest provinces of creation, we may feel the same security in his providence, as if we were the objects of his undivided care. It is not for us to bring our minds up to this mysterious agency. But, such is the incomprehensible fact, that the same Being, whose eye is abroad over the whole universe, gives vegetation to every blade of grass, and motion to every particle of blood which

circulates through the veins of the minutest animal; that, though his mind takes into its comprehensive grasp, immensity and all its wonders, I am as much known to him as if I were the single object of his attention; that he marks all my thoughts; that he gives birth to every feeling and every movement within me; and that, with an exercise of power which I can neither describe nor comprehend, the same God who sits in the highest heaven, and reigns over the glories of the firmament, is at my right hand, to give me every breath which I draw, and every comfort which I enjoy.

But this very reflection has been appropriated to the use of Infidelity, and the very language of the text has been made to bear an application of hostility to the faith. "What is man, that God should be mindful of him, or the son of man, that he should deign to visit him?" Is it likely, says the Infidel, that God would send his eternal Son, to die for the puny occupiers of so insignificant a province in the mighty field of his creation? Are we the befitting objects of so great and so signal an interposition? Does not the largeness of that field which astronomy lays open to the view of modern science, throw a suspicion over the truth of the gospel history; and how shall we reconcile the greatness of that wonderful movement which was made in heaven for the redemption of fallen man, with the comparative meanness and obscurity of our species?

This is a popular argument against Christianity, not much dwelt upon in books, but we believe, a good deal insinuated in conversation, and having no small influence on the amateurs of a superficial philosophy. At all events, it is right that every such argument should be met, and manfully confronted; nor do we know a more discreditable surrender of our religion, than to act as if she had any thing to fear from the ingenuity of her most accomplished

adversaries. The author of the following treatise, engages in his present undertaking, under the full impression, that a something may be found with which to combat Infidelity in all its forms; that the truth of God and of his message, admits of a noble and decisive manifestation, through every mist which the pride, or the prejudice, or the sophistry of man may throw around it; and elevated as the wisdom of him may be, who has ascended the heights of science, and poured the light of demonstration over the most wondrous of nature's mysteries, that even out of his own principles, it may be proved how much more elevated is the wisdom of him who sits with the docility of a little child, to his Bible, and casts down to its authority, all his lofty imaginations.

DISCOURSE II.

THE MODESTY OF TRUE SCIENCE.

"*And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.*"—1 Cor. vii. 2.

There is much profound and important wisdom in that proverb of Solomon, where it is said, that the heart knoweth its own bitterness. It forms part of a truth still more comprehensive, that every man knoweth his own peculiar feelings, and difficulties, and trials, far better than he can get any of his neighbours to perceive them. It is natural to us all, that we should desire to engross, to the uttermost, the sympathy of others with what is most painful to the sensibilities of our own bosom, and with what is most aggravating in the hardships of our own situation. But, labour it as we may, we cannot, with every power of expression, make an adequate conveyance, as it were, of all our sensations, and of all our circumstances, into another understanding. There is a something in the intimacy of a man's own experience, which he cannot make to pass entire into the heart and mind even of the most familiar companion—and thus it is, that he is so often defeated in his attempts to obtain a full and a cordial possession of his sympathy. He is mortified, and he wonders

at the obtuseness of the people around him—and how he cannot get them to enter into the justness of his complainings—nor to feel the point upon which turn the truth and the reason of his remonstrances—nor to give their interested attention to the case of his peculiarities and of his wrongs—nor to kindle, in generous resentment along with him, when he starts the topic of his indignation. He does not reflect, all the while, that, with every human being he addresses, there is an inner man, which forms a theatre of passions, and of interests, as busy, as crowded, and as fitted as his own to engross the anxious and the exercised feelings of a heart, which can alone understand its own bitterness, and lay a correct estimate on the burden of its own visitations. Every man we meet, carries about with him, in the unperceived solitude of his bosom, a little world of his own—and we are just as blind, and as insensible, and as dull, both of perception and of sympathy about his engrossing objects, as he is about ours; and, did we suffer this observation to have all its weight upon us, it might serve to make us more candid, and more considerate of others. It might serve to abate the monopolizing selfishness of our nature. It might serve to soften down all the malignity which comes out of those envious contemplations that we are so apt to cast on the fancied ease and prosperity which are around us. It might serve to reconcile every man to his own lot, and dispose him to bear, with thankfulness, his own burden; and sure I am, if this train of sentiment were prosecuted with firmness, and calmness, and impartiality, it would lead to the conclusion, that each profession in life has its own peculiar pains, and its own besetting inconveniences; that, from the very bottom of society, up to the golden pinnacle which blazons upon its summit, there is much in the shape of care and of suffering to be found—that, throughout all the conceivable varieties of human condition, there are trials,

which can neither be adequately told on the one side, nor fully understood on the other—that the ways of God to man are as equal in this, as in every department of his administration—and that, go to whatever quarter of human experience we may, we shall find how he has provided enough to exercise the patience, and to accomplish the purposes of a wise and a salutary discipline upon all his children.

I have brought forward this observation, that it may prepare the way for a second. There are perhaps no two sets of human beings, who comprehend less the movements, and enter less into the cares and concerns of each other, than the wide and busy public on the one hand; and, on the other, those men of close and studious retirement, whom the world never hears of, save when, from their thoughtful solitude, there issues forth some splendid discovery, to set the world on a gaze of admiration. Then will the brilliancy of a superior genius draw every eye towards it—and the homage paid to intellectual superiority, will place its idol on a loftier eminence than all wealth or than all titles can bestow—and the name of the successful philosopher will circulate, in his own age, over the whole extent of civilized society, and be borne down to posterity in the characters of ever-during remembrance—and thus it is, that, when we look back on the days of Newton, we annex a kind of mysterious greatness to him, who, by the pure force of his understanding, rose to such a gigantic elevation above the level of ordinary men—and the kings and warriors of other days sink into insignificance around him; and he, at this moment, stands forth to the public eye, in a prouder array of glory than circles the memory of all the men of former generations—and, while all the vulgar grandeur of other days is now mouldering in forgetfulness, the achievements of our great astronomer are still fresh in the veneration of his country-

men, and they carry him forward on the stream of time, with a reputation ever gathering, and the triumphs of a distinction that will never die.

Now, the point that I want to impress upon you is, that the same public, who are so dazzled and overborne by the lustre of all this superiority, are utterly in the dark as to what that is which confers its chief merit on the philosophy of Newton. They see the result of his labours, but they know not how to appreciate the difficulty or the extent of them. They look on the stately edifice he has reared, but they know not what he had to do in settling the foundation which gives to it all its stability—nor are they aware what painful encounters he had to make, both with the natural predilections of his own heart, and with the prejudices of others, when employed on the work of laying together its unperishing materials. They have never heard of the controversies which this man, of peaceful, unambitious modesty, had to sustain, with all that was proud and all that was intolerant in the philosophy of the age. They have never, in thought, entered that closet which was the scene of his patient and profound exercises——nor have they gone along with him, as he gave his silent hours to the labours of the midnight oil, and plied that unwearied task, to which the charm of lofty contemplation had allured him—nor have they accompanied him through all the workings of that wonderful mind, from which, as from the recesses of a laboratory, there came forth such gleams and processes of thought as shed an effulgency over the whole amplitude of nature. All this, the public have not done; for of this the great majority, even of the reading and cultivated public, are utterly incapable; and therefore is it that they need to be told what that is, in which the main distinction of his philosophy lies; that, when labouring in other fields of investigation, they may know

how to borrow from his safe example, and how to profit by that superior wisdom which marked the whole conduct of his understanding.

Let it be understood, then, that they are the positive discoveries of Newton, which, in the eye of a superficial public, confer upon him all his reputation. He discovered the mechanism of the planetary system. He discovered the composition of light. He discovered the cause of those alternate movements which take place on the waters of the ocean. These form his actual and his visible achievements. These are what the world look at as the monuments of his greatness. These are doctrines by which he has enriched the field of philosophy; and thus it is that the whole of his merit is supposed to lie in having had the sagacity to perceive, and the vigour to lay hold of the proofs, which conferred upon these doctrines all the establishment of a most rigid and conclusive demonstration.

But, while he gets all his credit, and all his admiration for those articles of science which he has added to the creed of philosophers, he deserves as much credit and admiration for those articles which he kept out of this creed, as for those which he introduced into it. It was the property of his mind, that it kept a tenacious hold of every one position which had proof to substantiate it—but it forms a property equally characteristic, and which, in fact, gives its leading peculiarity to the whole spirit and style of his investigations, that he put a most determined exclusion on every one position that was destitute of such proof. He would not admit the astronomical theories of those who went before him, because they had no proof. He would not give in to their notions about the planets wheeling their rounds in whirlpools of ether—for he did not see this ether—he had no proof of its existence—and, besides, even supposing it to exist, it would

not have impressed, on the heavenly bodies, such movements as met his observation. He would not submit his judgment to the reigning systems of the day—for, though they had authority to recommend them, they had no proof: and thus it is, that he evinced the strength and the soundness of his philosophy, as much by his decisions upon those doctrines of science which he rejected, as by his demonstration of those doctrines of science which he was the first to propose, and which now stand out to the eye of posterity as the only monuments to the force and superiority of his understanding.

He wanted no other recommendation for any one article of science, than the recommendation of evidence—and, with this recommendation, he opened to it the chamber of his mind, though authority scowled upon it, and taste was disgusted by it, and fashion was ashamed of it, and all the beauteous speculation of former days was cruelly broken up by this new announcement of the better philosophy, and scattered like the fragments of an aerial vision, over which the past generations of the world had been slumbering their profound and their pleasing reverie. But, on the other hand, should the article of science want the recommendation of evidence, he shut against it all the avenues of his understanding—aye, and though all antiquity lent their suffrages to it, and all eloquence had thrown around it the most attractive brilliancy, and all habit had incorporated it with every system of every seminary in Europe, and all fancy had arrayed it in graces of the most tempting solicitation; yet was the steady and inflexible mind of Newton proof against this whole weight of authority and allurement, and, casting his cold and unwelcome look at the specious plausibility, he rebuked it from his presence. The strength of his philosophy lay as much in refusing admittance to that which wanted evidence, as in giving a place and an occupancy to that which

possessed it. In that march of intellect, which led him onwards through the rich and magnificent field of his discoveries, he pondered every step; and, while he advanced with a firm and assured movement, wherever the light of evidence carried him, he never suffered any glare of imagination or of prejudice to seduce him from his path.

Sure I am, that, in the prosecution of his wonderful career, he found himself on a way beset with temptation upon every side of him. It was not merely that he had the reigning taste and philosophy of the times to contend with; but, he expatiated on a lofty region, where, in all the giddiness of success, he might have met with much to solicit his fancy, and tempt him to some devious speculation. Had he been like the majority of other men, he would have broken free from the fetters of a sober and chastised understanding, and, giving wing to his imagination, had done what philosophers have done after him—been carried away by some meteor of their own forming, or found their amusement in some of their own intellectual pictures, or palmed some loose and confident plausibilities of their own upon the world. But Newton stood true to his principle, that he would take up with nothing which wanted evidence, and he kept by his demonstrations, and his measurements, and his proofs; and, if it be true that he who ruleth his own spirit is greater than he who taketh a city, there was won, in the solitude of his chamber, many a repeated victory over himself, which should give a brighter lustre to his name than all the conquests he has made on the field of discovery, or than all the splendour of his positive achievements.

I trust you understand, how, though it be one of the maxims of the true philosophy, never to shrink from a doctrine which has evidence on its side, it is another maxim, equally essential to it, never to harbour any doctrine when this evidence is wanting. Take these two

maxims along with you, and you will be at no loss to explain the peculiarity, which, more than any other, goes both to characterise and to ennoble the philosophy of Newton. What I allude to is, the precious combination of its strength and of its modesty. On the one hand, what greater evidence of strength than the fulfilment of that mighty enterprise, by which the heavens have been made its own, and the mechanism of unnumbered worlds has been brought within the grasp of the human understanding? Now, it was by walking in the light of sound and competent evidence, that all this was accomplished. It was by the patient, the strenuous, the unfaultering application of the legitimate instruments of discovery. It was by touching that which was tangible, and looking to that which was visible, and computing that which was measurable, and in one word, by making a right and a reasonable use of all that proof which the field of nature around us has brought within the limit of sensible observation. This is the arena on which the modern philosophy has won all her victories, and fulfilled all her wondrous achievements, and reared all her proud and enduring monuments, and gathered all her magnificent trophies to that power of intellect with which the hand of a bounteous heaven has so richly gifted the constitution of our species.

But, on the other hand, go beyond the limits of sensible observation, and, from that moment, the genuine disciples of this enlightened school cast all their confidence and all their intrepidity away from them. Keep them on the firm ground of experiment, and none more bold and more decisive in their announcements of all that they have evidence for—but, off this ground, none more humble, or more cautious of any thing like positive announcements, than they. They choose neither to know, nor to believe, nor to assert, where evidence is wanting; and they will sit, with all the patience of a scholar to his task, till

they have found it. They are utter strangers to that haughty confidence with which some philosophers of the day sport the plausibilities of unauthorized speculation, and by which, unmindful of the limit that separates the region of sense from the region of conjecture, they make their blind and their impetuous inroads into a province which does not belong to them. There is no one object to which the exercised mind of a true Newtonian disciple is more familiarized than this limit, and it serves as a boundary by which he shapes, and bounds, and regulates, all the enterprises of his philosophy. All the space which lies within this limit, he cultivates to the uttermost, and it is by such successive labours, that every year which rolls over the world, is witnessing some new contribution to experimental science, and adding to the solidity and aggrandizement of this wonderful fabric. But, if true to their own principle, then, in reference to the forbidden ground which lies without this limit, those very men, who, on the field of warranted exertion, evinced all the hardihood and vigour of a full grown understanding, show, on every subject where the light of evidence is withheld from them, all the modesty of children. They give you positive opinion only when they have indisputable proof—but, when they have no such proof, then they have no such opinion. The single principle of their respect to truth, secures their homage for every one position, where the evidence of truth is present, and, at the same time, begets an entire diffidence about every one position, from which this evidence is disjoined. And thus you may understand, how the first man in the accomplishments of philosophy, which the world ever saw, sat at the book of nature in the humble attitude of its interpreter and its pupil—how all the docility of conscious ignorance threw a sweet and softening lustre around the radiance even of his most splendid discoveries—and, while the flippancy

of a few superficial acquirements is enough to place a philosopher of the day on the pedestal of his fancied elevation, and to vest him with an assumed lordship over the whole domain of natural and revealed knowledge; I cannot forbear to do honour to the unpretending greatness of Newton, than whom I know not if there ever lighted on the face of our world, one in the character of whose admirable genius so much force and so much humility were more attractively blended.

I now propose to carry you forward, by a few simple illustrations, to the argument of this day. All the sublime truths of the modern astronomy lie within the field of actual observation, and have the firm evidence to rest upon of all that information which is conveyed to us by the avenue of the senses. Sir Isaac Newton never went beyond this field, without a reverential impression upon his mind, of the precariousness of the ground on which he was standing. On this ground, he never ventured a positive affirmation—but, resigning the lofty tone of demonstration, and putting on the modesty of conscious ignorance, he brought forward all he had to say in the humble form of a doubt, or a conjecture, or a question. But, what he had not confidence to do, other philosophers have done after him—and they have winged their audacious way into forbidden regions—and they have crossed that circle by which the field of observation is enclosed—and there have they debated and dogmatized with all the pride of a most intolerant assurance.

Now, though the case be imaginary, let us conceive, for the sake of illustration, that one of these philosophers made so extravagant a departure from the sobriety of experimental science, as to pass from the astronomy of the different planets, and to attempt the natural history of their animal and vegetable kingdoms. He might get hold of some vague and general analogies, to throw an air of

plausibility around his speculation. He might pass from the botany of the different regions of the globe that we inhabit, and make his loose and confident application to each of the other planets, according to its distance from the sun, and the inclination of its axis to the plane of its annual revolution; and out of some such slender materials, he may work up an amusing philosophical romance, full of ingenuity, and having, withal, the colour of truth and of consistency spread over it.

I can conceive how a superficial public might be delighted by the eloquence of such a composition, and even be impressed by its arguments; but were I asked, which is the man of all the ages and countries in the world, who would have the least respect for this treatise upon the plants which grow on the surface of Jupiter, I should be at no loss to answer the question. I should say, that it would be he who had computed the motions of Jupiter—that it would be he who had measured the bulk and the density of Jupiter—that it would be he who had estimated the periods of Jupiter—that it would be he whose observant eye and patiently calculating mind, had traced the satellites of Jupiter through all the rounds of their mazy circulation, and unravelled the intricacy of all their movements. He would see at once that the subject lay at a hopeless distance beyond the field of legitimate observation. It would be quite enough for him, that it was beyond the range of his telescope. On this ground, and on this ground only, would he reject it as one of the puniest imbecilities of childhood. As to any character of truth or of importance, it would have no more effect on such a mind as that of Newton, than any illusion of poetry; and from the eminence of his intellectual throne, would he cast a penetrating glance at the whole speculation, and bid its gaudy insignificance away from him.

But let us pass onward to another case, which, though as imaginary as the former, may still serve the purpose of illustration.

This same adventurous philosopher may be conceived to shift his speculation from the plants of another world to the character of its inhabitants. He may avail himself of some slender correspondencies between the heat of the sun and the moral temperament of the people it shines upon. He may work up a theory, which carries on the front of it some of the characters of plausibility: but surely it does not require the philosophy of Newton to demonstrate the folly of such an enterprise. There is not a man of plain understanding, who does not perceive that this said ambitious inquirer has got without his reach—that he has stepped beyond the field of experience, and is now expatiating on the field of imagination—that he has ventured on a dark unknown, where the wisest of all philosophy, is the philosophy of silence, and a profession of ignorance is the best evidence of a solid understanding; that if he think he knows any thing on such a subject as this, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. He knows not what Newton knew, and what he kept a steady eye upon throughout the whole march of his sublime investigations. He knows not the limit of his own faculties. He has overleaped the barrier which hems in all the possibilities of human attainment. He has wantonly flung himself off from the safe and firm field of observation, and got on that undiscoverable ground, where, by every step he takes, he widens his distance from the true philosophy, and by every affirmation he utters, he rebels against the authority of all its maxims.

I can conceive it the feeling of every one of you, that I have hitherto indulged in a vain expense of argument, and it is most natural for you to put the question, "What is the precise point of convergence to which I am direct-

ing all the light of this abundant and seemingly superfluous illustration?"

In the astronomical objection which infidelity has proposed against the truth of the Christian revelation, there is first an assertion, and then an argument. The assertion is, that Christianity is set up for the exclusive benefit of our minute and solitary world. The argument is, that God would not lavish such a quantity of attention on so insignificant a field. Even though the assertion were admitted, I should have a quarrel with the argument. But the futility of the objection is not laid open in all its extent, unless we expose the utter want of all essential evidence even for the truth of the assertion. How do infidels know that Christianity is set up for the single benefit of this earth and its inhabitants? How are they able to tell us, that if you go to other planets, the person and the religion of Jesus, are there unknown to them? We challenge them to the proof of this said positive announcement of theirs. We see in this objection the same rash and gratuitous procedure, which was so apparent in the two cases that we have already advanced for the purpose of illustration. We see in it the same glaring transgression on the spirit and the maxims of that very philosophy which they profess to idolize. They have made their argument against us, out of an assertion which has positively no feet to rest upon—an assertion which they have no means whatever of verifying—an assertion, the truth or the falsehood of which can only be gathered out of some supernatural message, for it lies completely beyond the range of human observation. It is willingly admitted, that by an attempt at the botany of other worlds, the true method of philosophizing is trampled on; for this is a subject that lies beyond the range of actual observation, and every performance upon it must be made up of assertions without proofs. It is also willingly admitted,

that an attempt at the civil and political history of their people, would be an equally extravagant departure from the spirit of the true philosophy ; for this also lies beyond the field of actual observation ; and all that could possibly be mustered up on such a subject as this, would still be assertions without proofs. Now, the theology of these planets is, in every way, as inaccessible a subject as their politics or their natural history ; and therefore it is, that the objection, grounded on the confident assumption of those infidel astronomers, who assert Christianity to be the religion of this one world, or that the religion of these other worlds is not our very Christianity, can have no influence on a mind that has derived its habits of thinking from the pure and rigorous school of Newton : for the whole of this assertion is just as glaringly destitute, as in the two former instances, of proof.

The man who could embark in an enterprise so foolish and so fanciful, as to theorise it on the details of the botany of another world, or to theorise it on the natural and moral history of its people, is just making as outrageous a departure from all sense, and all science, and all sobriety, when he presumes to speculate, or to assert on the details or the methods of God's administration among its rational and accountable inhabitants. He wings his fancy to as hazardous a region, and vainly strives a penetrating vision through the mantle of as deep an obscurity. All the elements of such a speculation are hidden from him. For any thing he can tell, sin has found its way into these other worlds. For any thing he can tell, their people have banished themselves from communion with God. For any thing he can tell, many a visit has been made to each of them, on the subject of our common Christianity, by commissioned messengers from the throne of the Eternal. For any thing he can tell, the redemption proclaimed to us is not one solitary instance, or not

the whole of that redemption which is by the Son of God —but only our part in a plan of mercy, equal in magnificence to all that astronomy has brought within the range of human contemplation. For any thing he can tell, the moral pestilence, which walks abroad over the face of our world, may have spread its desolation over all the planets of all the systems, which the telescope has made known to us. For any thing he can tell, some mighty redemption has been devised in heaven, to meet this disaster in the whole extent and malignity of its visitations. For any thing he can tell, the wonderworking God, who has strewed the field of immensity with so many worlds, and spread the shelter of his omnipotence over them, may have sent a message of love to each, and re-assured the hearts of its despairing people by some overpowering manifestation of tenderness. For any thing he can tell, angels from paradise may have sped to every planet their delegated way, and sung, from each azure canopy, a joyful annunciation, and said, "Peace be to this residence, and good will to all its families, and glory to Him in the highest, who, from the eminency of his throne, has issued an act of grace so magnificent, as to carry the tidings of life and of acceptance to the unnumbered orbs of a sinful creation." For any thing he can tell, the Eternal Son, of whom it is said, that by him the worlds were created, may have had the government of many sinful worlds laid upon his shoulders; and by the power of his mysterious word, have awoke them all from that spiritual death, to which they had sunk in lethargy as profound as the slumbers of non-existence. For any thing he can tell, the one Spirit who moved on the face of the waters, and whose presiding influence it was, that hushed the wild war of nature's elements, and made a beauteous system emerge out of its disjointed materials, may now be working with the fragments of another chaos; and educing order, and obedi-

ence, and harmony, out of the wrecks of a moral rebellion, which reaches through all these spheres, and spreads disorder to the uttermost limits of our astronomy.

But, here I stop—nor shall I attempt to grope my dark and fatiguing way, by another inch, among such sublime and mysterious secrecies. It is not I who am offering to lift this curtain. It is not I who am pitching my adventurous flight to the secret things which belong to God, away from the things that are revealed, and which belong to me and to my children. It is the champion of that very infidelity which I am now combating. It is he who props his unchristian argument, by presumptions fetched out of those untravelled obscurities which lie on the other side of a barrier that I pronounce to be impassable. It is he who transgresses the limits which Newton forebore to enter; because, with a justness which reigns throughout all his inquiries, he saw the limit of his own understanding, nor would he venture himself beyond it. It is he who has borrowed from the philosophy of this wondrous man, a few dazzling conceptions, which have only served to bewilder him—while, an utter stranger to the spirit of this philosophy, he has carried a daring and an ignorant speculation far beyond the boundary of its prescribed and allowable enterprises. It is he who has mustered against the truths of the Gospel, resting, as it does, on the evidence within the reach of his faculties, an objection, for the truth of which he has no evidence whatever. It is he who puts away from him a doctrine, for which he has the substantial and the familiar proof of human testimony; and substitutes in its place a doctrine for which he can get no other support than from a reverie of his own imagination. It is he who turns aside from all that safe and certain argument, that is supplied by the history of this world, of which he knows something; and who loses himself in the work of theorising about other

worlds, of the moral and theological history of which he positively knows nothing. Upon him, and not upon us, lies the folly of launching his impetuous way beyond the province of observation—of letting his fancy afloat among the unknown of distant and mysterious regions; and by an act of daring, as impious as it is unphilosophical, of trying to unwrap that shroud, which, till drawn aside by the hand of a messenger from heaven, will ever veil, from human eye, the purposes of the Eternal.

If you have gone along with me in the preceding observations, you will perceive how they are calculated to disarm of all its point and all its energy, that flippancy of Voltaire; when, in the examples he gives of the dotage of the human understanding, he tells us of Bacon having believed in witchcraft, and Sir Isaac Newton having written a Commentary on the Book of Revelation. The former instance we shall not undertake to vindicate; but in the latter instance, we perceive what this brilliant and spacious, but withal superficial, apostle of infidelity, either did not see, or refused to acknowledge. We see in this intellectual labourer of our great philosopher, the working of the very same principles which carried him through the profoundest and the most successful of his investigations; and how he kept most sacredly and most consistently by those very maxims, the authority of which he, even in the full vigour and manhood of his faculties, ever recognised. We see in the theology of Newton, the very spirit and principle which gave all its stability, and all its sureness, to the philosophy of Newton. We see the same tenacious adherence to every one doctrine, that had such valid proof to uphold it, as could be gathered from the field of human experience; and we see the same firm resistance of every one argument, that had nothing to recommend it, but such plausibilities as could easily be devised by the genius of man, when he expatiated abroad

on those fields of creation, which the eye never witnessed, and from which no messenger ever came to us with any credible information. Now, it was on the former of these two principles that Newton clung so determinedly to his Bible, as the record of an actual annunciation from God to the inhabitants of this world. When he turned his attention to this book, he came to it with a mind tutored to the philosophy of facts—and, when he looked at its credentials, he saw the stamp and the impress of this philosophy on every one of them. He saw the fact of Christ being a messenger from heaven, in the audible language by which it was conveyed from heaven's canopy to human ears. He saw the fact of his being an approved ambassador of God, in those miracles which carried their own resistless evidence along with them to human eyes. He saw the truth of this whole history brought home to his own conviction, by a sound and substantial vehicle of human testimony. He saw the reality of that supernatural light, which inspired the prophecies he himself illustrated, by such an agreement with the events of a various and distant futurity as could be taken cognizance of by human observation. He saw the wisdom of God pervading the whole substance of the written message, in such manifold adaptations to the circumstances of man, and to the whole secrecy of his thoughts, and his affections, and his spiritual wants, and his moral sensibilities, as even in the mind of an ordinary and unlettered peasant, can be attested by human consciousness. These formed the solid materials of the basis on which our experimental philosopher stood; and there was nothing in the whole compass of his own astronomy to dazzle him away from it; and he was too well aware of the limit between what he knew and what he did not know, to be seduced from the ground he had taken, by any of those brilliancies which have since led so many of his humbler successors into the track of in-

fidelity. He had measured the distances of these planets. He had calculated their periods. He had estimated their figures, and their bulk, and their densities, and he had subordinated the whole intricacy of their movements to the simple and sublime agency of one commanding principle. But he had too much of the ballast of a substantial understanding about him, to be thrown afloat by all this success among the plausibilities of wanton and unauthorised speculation. He knew the boundary which hemmed him. He knew that he had not thrown one particle of light on the moral or religious history of these planetary regions. He had not ascertained what visits of communication they received from the God who upholds them. But he knew that the fact of a real visit made to this planet, had such evidence to rest upon, that it was not to be disposted by any aerial imagination. And when I look at the steady and unmoved Christianity of this wonderful man; so far from seeing any symptom of dotage and imbecility, or any forgetfulness of those principles on which the fabric of his philosophy is reared; do I see, that in sitting down to the work of a Bible Commentator, he hath given us their most beautiful and most consistent exemplification.

I did not anticipate such a length of time, and of illustration, in this stage of my argument. But I will not regret it, if I have familiarized the minds of any of my readers to the reigning principle of this Discourse. We are strongly disposed to think, that it is a principle which might be made to apply to every argument of every unbeliever—and so to serve not merely as an antidote against the infidelity of astronomers, but to serve as an antidote against all infidelity. We are well aware of the diversity of complexion which infidelity puts on. It looks one thing in the man of science and of liberal accomplishment. It looks another thing in the refined voluptuary. It looks still another thing in the common-place railer against the

artifices of priestly domination. It looks another thing in the dark and unsettled spirit of him, whose every reflection is tinctured with gall, and who casts his envious and malignant scowl at all that stands associated with the established order of society. It looks another thing in the prosperous man of business, who has neither time nor patience for the details of the christian evidence—but who, amid the hurry of his other occupations, has gathered as many of the lighter petulancies of the infidel writers, and caught, from the perusal of them, as contemptuous a tone towards the religion of the New Testament, as to set him at large from all the decencies of religious observation, and to give him the disdain of an elevated complacency over all the follies of what he counts a vulgar superstition. And, lastly, for infidelity has now got down among us to the humblest walks of life; may it occasionally be seen lowering on the forehead of the resolute and hardy artificer, who can lift his menacing voice against the priesthood, and, looking on the Bible as a jugglery of theirs, can bid stout defiance to all its denunciations. Now, under all these varieties, we think that there might be detected the one and universal principle which we have attempted to expose. The something, whatever it is, which has dispossessed all these people of their Christianity, exists in their minds, in the shape of a position, which they hold to be true, but which, by no legitimate evidence, they have ever realized—and a position which lodges within them as a wilful fancy or presumption of their own, but which could not stand the touchstone of that wise and solid principle, in virtue of which, the followers of Newton give to observation the precedence over theory. It is a principle altogether worthy of being laboured—as, if carried round in faithful and consistent application among these numerous varieties, it is able to break up all the existing infidelity of the world.

But there is one other most important conclusion to which it carries us. It carries us, with all the docility of children, to the Bible; and puts us down into the attitude of an unreserved surrender of thought and understanding, to its authoritative information. Without the testimony of an authentic messenger from heaven, I know nothing of heaven's counsels. I never heard of any moral telescope that can bring to my observation the doings or the deliberations which are taking place in the sanctuary of the Eternal. I may put into the registers of my belief, all that comes home to me through the senses of the outer man, or by the consciousness of the inner man. But neither the one nor the other can tell me of the purposes of God; can tell me of the transactions or the designs of his sublime monarchy; can tell me of the goings forth of Him who is from everlasting unto everlasting; can tell me of the march and the movements of that great administration which embraces all worlds, and takes into its wide and comprehensive survey the mighty roll of innumerable ages. It is true that my fancy may break its impetuous way into this lofty and inaccessible field; and through the devices of my heart, which are many, the visions of an ever-shifting theology may take their alternate sway over me; but the counsel of the Lord, it shall stand. And I repeat it, that if true to the leading principle of that philosophy, which has poured such a flood of light over the mysteries of nature, we shall dismiss every self-formed conception of our own, and wait in all the humility of conscious ignorance, till the Lord himself shall break his silence, and make his counsel known, by an act of communication. And now, that a professed communication is before me, and that it has all the solidity of the experimental evidence on its side, and nothing but the reveries of a daring speculation to oppose it, what is the consistent, what is the rational, what is the philosophical use that

should be made of this document, but to set me down like a school-boy, to the work of turning its pages, and conning its lessons, and submitting the every exercise of my judgment to its information and its testimony? We know that there is a superficial philosophy, which casts the glare of a most seducing brilliancy around it; and spurns the Bible, with all the doctrine, and all the piety of the Bible, away from it; and has infused the spirit of Antichrist into many of the literary establishments of the age; but it is not the solid, the profound, the cautious spirit of that philosophy, which has done so much to ennoble the modern period of our world; for the more that this spirit is cultivated and understood, the more will it be found in alliance with that spirit, in virtue of which all that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, is humbled, and all lofty imaginations are cast down, and every thought of the heart is brought into the captivity of the obedience of Christ.

DISCOURSE III.

ON THE EXTENT OF THE DIVINE CONDESCENSION.

"*Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high? Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth?*"—Psalm cxiii. 5, 6.

In our last Discourse, we attempted to expose the total want of evidence for the assertion of the infidel astronomer—and this reduces the whole of our remaining controversy with him, to the business of arguing against a mere possibility. Still, however, the answer is not so complete as it might be, till the soundness of the argument be attended to, as well as the credibility of the assertion—or, in other words, let us admit the assertion, and take a view of the reasoning which has been constructed upon it.

We have already attempted to lay before you the wonderful extent of that space, teeming with unnumbered worlds, which modern science has brought within the circle of its discoveries. We even ventured to expatiate on those tracts of infinity, which lie on the other side of all that eye or that telescope hath made known to us—to shoot afar into those ulterior regions, which are beyond

the limits of our astronomy—to impress you with the rashness of the imagination, that the creative energy of God had sunk exhausted by the magnitude of its efforts, at that very line, through which the art of man, lavished as it has been on the work of perfecting the instruments of vision, has not yet been able to penetrate; and upon all this we hazarded the assertion, that though all these visible heavens were to rush into annihilation, and the besom of the Almighty's wrath were to sweep from the face of the universe, those millions, and millions more of suns and of systems, which lie within the grasp of our actual observation—that this event, which, to our eye, would leave so wide, and so dismal a solitude behind it, might be nothing in the eye of Him who could take in the whole, but the disappearance of a little speck from that field of created things, which the hand of his omnipotence had thrown around him.

But to press home the sentiment of the text, it is not necessary to stretch the imagination beyond the limit of our actual discoveries. It is enough to strike our minds with the insignificance of this world, and of all who inhabit it, to bring it into measurement with that mighty assemblage of worlds, which lie open to the eye of man, aided as it has been by the inventions of his genius. When we told you of the eighty millions of suns, each occupying his own independent territory in space, and dispensing his own influences over a cluster of tributary worlds; this world could not fail to sink into littleness in the eye of him who looked to all the magnitude and variety which are around it. We gave you but a feeble image of our comparative insignificance, when we said that the glories of an extended forest would suffer no more from the fall of a single leaf, than the glories of this extended universe would suffer, though the globe we tread, "and all that it inherits, should dissolve." And when we

lift our conceptions to Him who has peopled immensity with all these wonders—who sits enthroned on the magnificence of his own works, and by one sublime idea can embrace the whole extent of that boundless amplitude, which he has filled with the trophies of his divinity; we cannot but resign our whole heart to the Psalmist's exclamation of "What is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou shouldest deign to visit him!"

Now mark the use to which all this has been turned by the genius of infidelity. Such a humble portion of the universe as ours, could never have been the object of such high and distinguishing attentions as Christianity has assigned to it. God would not have manifested himself in the flesh for the salvation of so paltry a world. The monarch of a whole continent, would never move from his capital, and lay aside the splendour of royalty; and subject himself for months, or for years, to perils, and poverty, and persecution; and take up his abode in some small islet of his dominions, which, though swallowed by an earthquake, could not be missed amid the glories of so wide an empire; and all this to regain the lost affections of a few families upon its surface. And neither would the eternal Son of God—he who is revealed to us as having made all worlds, and as holding an empire, amid the splendours of which the globe that we inherit, is shaded in insignificance; neither would he strip himself of the glory he had with the Father before the world was, and light on this lower scene, for the purpose imputed to him in the New Testament. Impossible, that the concerns of this puny ball, which floats its little round among an infinity of larger worlds, should be of such mighty account in the plans of the Eternal, or should have given birth in heaven to so wonderful a movement, as the Son of God putting on the form of our degraded species, and sojourning among us, and sharing in all our

infirmities, and crowning the whole scene of humiliation, by the disgrace and the agonies of a cruel martyrdom.

This has been started as a difficulty in the way of the Christian Revelation; and it is the boast of many of our philosophical infidels, that by the light of modern discovery, the light of the New Testament is eclipsed and overborne; and the mischief is not confined to philosophers, for the argument has got into others hands, and the popular illustrations that are now given to the sublimest truths of science, have widely disseminated all the deism that has been grafted upon it; and the high tone of a decided contempt for the Gospel, is now associated with the flippancy of superficial acquirements: and, while the venerable Newton, whose genius threw open those mighty fields of contemplation, found a fit exercise for his powers in the interpretation of the Bible, there are thousands and tens of thousands, who, though walking in the light which he holds out to them, are seduced by a complacency which he never felt, and inflated by a pride which never entered into his pious and philosophical bosom, and whose only notice of the Bible, is to depreciate, and to deride, and to disown it.

Before entering into what we conceive to be the right answer to this objection, let us previously observe, that it goes to strip the Deity of an attribute, which forms a wonderful addition to the glories of his incomprehensible character. It is indeed a mighty evidence of the strength of his arm, that so many millions of worlds are suspended on it; but it would surely make the high attribute of his power more illustrious, if, while it expatiated at large among the suns and the systems of astronomy, it could, at the very same instant, be impressing a movement and a direction on all the minuter wheels of that machinery, which is working incessantly around us. It forms a noble demonstration of his wisdom, that he gives unremitting operation to those

laws which uphold the stability of this great universe; but it would go to heighten that wisdom inconceivably, if, while equal to the magnificent task of maintaining the order and harmony of the spheres, it was lavishing its inexhaustible resources on the beauties, and varieties, and arrangements, of every one scene, however humble, of every one field, however narrow, of the creation he had formed. It is a cheering evidence of the delight he takes in communicating happiness, that the whole of immensity should be so strewed with the habitations of life and of intelligence; but it would surely bring home the evidence, with a nearer and more affecting impression, to every bosom, did we know, that at the very time his benignant regard took in the mighty circle of created beings, there was not a single family overlooked by him, and that every individual in every corner of his dominions, was as effectually seen to, as if the object of an exclusive and undivided care. It is our imperfection, that we cannot give our attention to more than one object at one and the same instant of time; but surely it would elevate our every idea of the perfections of God, did we know, that while his comprehensive mind could grasp the whole amplitude of nature, to the very outermost of its boundaries, he had an attentive eye fastened on the very humblest of its objects, and pondered every thought of my heart, and noticed every footstep of my goings, and treasured up in his remembrance every turn and every movement of my history.

And, lastly, to apply this train of sentiment to the matter before us; let us suppose that one among the countless myriads of worlds, should be visited by a moral pestilence, which spread through all its people, and brought them under the doom of a law, whose sanctions were unrelenting and immutable; it were no disparagement to God, should he, by an act of righteous indignation, sweep

this offence away from the universe which it deformed—nor should we wonder, though, among the multitude of other worlds from which the ear of the Almighty was regaled with the songs of praise, and the incense of a pure adoration ascended to his throne, he should leave the strayed and solitary world to perish in the guilt of its rebellion. But, tell me, oh! tell me, would it not throw the softening of a most exquisite tenderness over the character of God, should we see him putting forth his every expedient to reclaim to himself those children who had wandered away from him—and, few as they were when compared with the host of his obedient worshippers, would it not just impart to his attribute of compassion the infinity of the Godhead, that, rather than lose the single world which had turned to its own way, he should send the messengers of peace to woo and to welcome it back again; and, if justice demanded so mighty a sacrifice, and the law behooved to be so magnified and made honourable, tell me whether it would not throw a moral sublime over the goodness of the Deity, should he lay upon his own Son the burden of its atonement, that he might again smile upon the world, and hold out the sceptre of invitation to all its families?

We avow it, therefore, that this infidel argument goes to expunge a perfection from the character of God. The more we know of the extent of nature, should not we have the loftier conception of him who sits in high authority over the concerns of so wide a universe? But, is it not adding to the bright catalogue of his other attributes, to say, that, while magnitude does not overpower him, minuteness cannot escape him, and variety cannot bewilder him; and that, at the very time while the mind of the Deity is abroad over the whole vastness of creation, there is not one particle of matter, there is not one individual principle of rational or of animal existence, there is not one

single world in that expanse which teems with them, that his eye does not discern as constantly, and his hand does not guide as unerringly, and his spirit does not watch and care for as vigilantly, as if it formed the one and exclusive object of his attention.

The thing is inconceivable to us, whose minds are so easily distracted by a number of objects, and this is the secret principle of the whole infidelity I am now alluding to. To bring God to the level of our own comprehension, we would clothe him in the impotency of a man. We would transfer to his wonderful mind all the imperfection of our own faculties. When we are taught by astronomy, that he has millions of worlds to look after, and thus add in one direction to the glories of his character; we take away from them in another, by saying, that each of these worlds must be looked after imperfectly. The use that we make of a discovery, which should heighten our every conception of God, and humble us into the sentiment, that a Being of such mysterious elevation is to us unfathomable, is to sit in judgment over him, aye, and to pronounce such a judgment as degrades him, and keeps him down to the standard of our own paltry imagination! We are introduced by modern science to a multitude of other suns and of other systems; and the perverse interpretation we put upon the fact, that God *can* diffuse the benefits of his power and of his goodness over such a variety of worlds, is, that he *cannot*, or will not, bestow so much goodness on one of those worlds, as a professed revelation from Heaven has announced to us. While we enlarge the provinces of his empire, we tarnish all the glory of this enlargement, by saying, he has so much to care for, that the care of every one province must be less complete, and less vigilant, and less effectual, than it would otherwise have been. By the discoveries of modern science, we multiply the places of the creation; but

along with this, we would impair the attribute of his eye being in every place to behold the evil and the good ; and thus, while we magnify one of his perfections, we do it at the expense of another ; and to bring him within the grasp of our feeble capacity, we would deface one of the glories of that character, which it is our part to adore, as higher than all thought, and as greater than all comprehension.

The objection we are discussing, I shall state again in a single sentence. Since astronomy has unfolded to us such a number of worlds, it is not likely that God would pay so much attention to this one world, and set up such wonderful provisions for its benefit, as are announced to us in the Christian Revelation. This objection will have received its answer, if we can meet it by the following position : —that God, in addition to the bare faculty of dwelling on a multiplicity of objects at one and the same time, has this faculty in such wonderful perfection, that he can attend as fully, and provide as richly, and manifest all his attributes as illustriously, on every one of these objects, as if the rest had no existence, and no place whatever in his government or in his thoughts. For the evidence of this position, we appeal, in the first place, to the personal history of each individual among you. Only grant us, that God never loses sight of any one thing he has created, and that no created thing can continue either to be or to act independently of him ; and then, even upon the face of this world, humble as it is on the great scale of astronomy, how widely diversified and how multiplied into many thousand distinct exercises, is the attention of God ! His eye is upon every hour of my existence. His spirit is intimately present with every thought of my heart. His inspiration gives birth to every purpose within me. His hand impresses a direction on every footstep of my goings. Every breath I inhale, is drawn

by an energy which God deals out to me. This body, which, upon the slightest derangement, would become the prey of death, or of woful suffering, is now at ease, because he at this moment is warding off from me a thousand dangers, and upholding the thousand movements of its complex and delicate machinery. His presiding influence keeps by me through the whole current of my restless and ever changing history. When I walk by the way side, he is along with me. When I enter into company, amid all my forgetfulness of him, he never forgets me. In the silent watches of the night, when my eyelids have closed, and my spirit has sunk into unconsciousness, the observant eye of him who never slumbers, is upon me. I cannot fly from his presence. Go where I will, he tends me, and watches me, and cares for me; and the same being who is now at work in the remotest domains of Nature and of Providence, is also at my right hand to eke out to me every moment of my being, and to uphold me in the exercise of all my feelings, and of all my faculties.

Now, what God is doing with me, he is doing with every distinct individual of this world's population. The intimacy of his presence, and attention, and care, reaches to one and to all of them. With a mind unburdened by the vastness of all its other concerns, he can prosecute, without distraction, the government and guardianship of every one son and daughter of the species.—And is it for us, in the face of all this experience, ungratefully to draw a limit around the perfections of God—to aver, that the multitude of other worlds has withdrawn any portion of his benevolence from the one we occupy—or that he, whose eye is upon every separate family of the earth, would not lavish all the riches of his unsearchable attributes on some high plan of pardon and immortality, in behalf of its countless generations?

But, secondly, were the mind of God so fatigued, and so occupied with the care of other worlds, as the objection presumes him to be, should we not see some traces of neglect, or of carelessness, in his management of ours? Should we not behold, in many a field of observation, the evidence of its master being overcrowded with the variety of his other engagements? A man oppressed by a multitude of business, would simplify and reduce the work of any new concern that was devolved upon him. Now, point out a single mark of God being thus oppressed. Astronomy has laid open to us so many realms of creation, which were before unheard of, that the world we inhabit shrinks into one remote and solitary province of his wide monarchy. Tell me, then, if, in any one field of this province, which man has access to, you witness a single indication of God sparing himself—of God reduced to languor by the weight of his other employments—of God sinking under the burden of that vast superintendence which lies upon him—of God being exhausted, as one of ourselves would be, by any number of concerns, however great, by any variety of them, however manifold; and do you not perceive, in that mighty profusion of wisdom and of goodness, which is scattered every where around us, that the thoughts of this unsearchable Being are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways?

My time does not suffer me to dwell on this topic, because, before I conclude, I must hasten to another illustration. But, when I look abroad on the wondrous scene that is immediately before me—and see, that in every direction it is a scene of the most various and unwearied activity—and expatiate on all the beauties of that garniture by which it is adorned, and on all the prints of design and of benevolence which abound in it—and think, that the same God, who holds the universe, with its every system, in the hollow of his hand, pencils every

flower, and gives nourishment to every blade of grass, and actuates the movements of every living thing, and is not disabled, by the weight of his other cares, from enriching the humble department of nature I occupy, with charms and accommodations, of the most unbounded variety—then, surely, if a message, bearing every mark of authenticity, should profess to come to me from God, and inform me of his mighty doings for the happiness of our species, it is not for me, in the face of all this evidence, to reject it as a tale of imposture, because astronomers have told me that he has so many other worlds and other orders of beings to attend to—and, when I think that it were a deposition of him from his supremacy over the creatures he has formed, should a single sparrow fall to the ground without his appointment, then let science and sophistry try to cheat me of my comfort as they may—I will not let go the anchor of my confidence in God—I will not be afraid, for I am of more value than many sparrows.

But thirdly, it was the telescope, that, by piercing the obscurity which lies between us and distant worlds, put infidelity in possession of the argument, against which we are now contending. But, about the time of its invention, another instrument was formed, which laid open a scene no less wonderful, and rewarded the inquisitive spirit of man with a discovery, which serves to neutralize the whole of this argument. This was the microscope. The one led me to see a system in every star. The other leads me to see a world in every atom. The one taught me, that this mighty globe, with the whole burden of its people, and of its countries, is but a grain of sand on the high field of immensity. The other teaches me, that every grain of sand may harbour within it the tribes and the families of a busy population. The one told me of the insignificance of the world I tread upon. The other redeems it from all its insignificance; for it tells me that

in the leaves of every forest, and in the flowers of every garden, and in the waters of every rivulet, there are worlds teeming with life, and numberless as are the glories of the firmament. The one has suggested to me, that beyond and above all that is visible to man, there may lie fields of creation which sweep immeasurably along, and carry the impress of the Almighty's hand to the remotest scenes of the universe. The other suggests to me, that within and beneath all that minuteness which the aided eye of man has been able to explore, there may be a region of invisibles ; and that could we draw aside the mysterious curtain which shrouds it from our senses, we might there see a theatre of as many wonders as astronomy has unfolded, a universe within the compass of a point so small, as to elude all the powers of the microscope, but where the wonder-working God finds room for the exercise of all his attributes, where he can raise another mechanism of worlds, and fill and animate them all with the evidences of his glory.

Now, mark how all this may be made to meet the argument of our infidel astronomers. By the telescope they have discovered, that no magnitude, however vast, is beyond the grasp of the Divinity. But by the microscope, we have also discovered, that no minuteness, however shrunk from the notice of the human eye, is beneath the condescension of his regard. Every addition to the powers of the one instrument, extends the limit of his visible dominions. But, by every addition to the powers of the other instrument, we see each part of them more crowded than before, with the wonders of his unwearying hand. The one is constantly widening the circle of his territory. The other is as constantly filling up its separate portions, with all that is rich, and various, and exquisite. In a word, by the one I am told that the Almighty is now at work in regions more distant than geometry has ever mea-

sured, and among worlds more manifold than numbers have ever reached. But, by the other, I am also told, that, with a mind to comprehend the whole, in the vast compass of its generality, he has also a mind to concentrate a close and a separate attention on each and on all of its particulars; and that the same God, who sends forth an upholding influence among the orbs and the movements of astronomy, can fill the recesses of every single atom with the intimacy of his presence, and travel, in all the greatness of his unimpaired attributes, upon every one spot and corner of the universe he has formed.

They, therefore, who think that God will not put forth such a power, and such a goodness, and such a condescension, in behalf of this world, as are ascribed to him in the New Testament, because he has so many other worlds to attend to, think of him as a man. They confine their view to the informations of the telescope, and forget altogether the informations of the other instrument. They only find room in their minds for his one attribute of a large and general superintendence, and keep out of their remembrance the equally impressive proofs we have for his other attribute of a minute and multiplied attention to all that diversity of operations, where it is he that worketh all in all. And then I think, that, as one of the instruments of philosophy has heighthened our every impression of the first of these attributes, so another instrument has no less heightened our impression of the second of them—then I can no longer resist the conclusion, that it would be a transgression of sound argument, as well as a daring of impiety, to draw a limit around the doings of this unsearchable God—and, should a professed revelation from heaven, tell me of an act of condescension, in behalf of some separate world, so wonderful that angels desired to look into it, and the Eternal Son had to move from his seat of glory to carry it into accomplishment, all

I ask is the evidence of such a revelation; for, let it tell me as much as it may of God letting himself down for the benefit of one single province of his dominions, this is no more than what I see lying scattered, in numberless examples, before me; and running through the whole line of my recollections; and meeting me in every walk of observation to which I can betake myself; and, now that the microscope has unveiled the wonders of another region, I see strewed around me with a profusion which baffles my every attempt to comprehend it, the evidence that there is no one portion of the universe of God too minute for his notice, nor too humble for the visitations of his care.

As the end of all these illustrations, let me bestow a single paragraph on what I conceive to be the precise state of this argument.

It is a wonderful thing that God should be so unincumbered by the concerns of a whole universe, that he can give a constant attention to every moment of every individual in this world's population. But, wonderful as it is, you do not hesitate to admit it as true, on the evidence of your own recollections. It is a wonderful thing that he whose eye is at every instant on so many worlds, should have peopled the world we inhabit with all the traces of the varied design and benevolence which abound in it. But, great as the wonder is, you do not allow so much as the shadow of improbability to darken it, for its reality is what you actually witness, and you never think of questioning the evidence of observation. It is wonderful, it is passing wonderful, that the same God, whose presence is diffused through immensity, and who spreads the ample canopy of his administration over all its dwelling-places, should, with an energy as fresh and as unexpended as if he had only begun the work of creation, turn him to the neighbourhood around us, and lavish, on its every hand-breadth, all the exuberance of his goodness,

and crowd it with the many thousand varieties of conscious existence. But, be the wonder incomprehensible as it may, you do not suffer in your mind the burden of a single doubt to lie upon it, because you do not question the report of the microscope. You do not refuse its information, nor turn away from it as an incompetent channel of evidence. But to bring it still nearer to the point at issue, there are many who never looked through a microscope, but who rest an implicit faith in all its revelations; and upon what evidence, I would ask? Upon the evidence of testimony—upon the credit they give to the authors of the books they have read, and the belief they put in the record of their observations. Now, at this point I make my stand. It is wonderful that God should be so interested in the redemption of a single world, as to send forth his well-beloved Son upon the errand, and he, to accomplish it, should, mighty to save, put forth all his strength, and travail in the greatness of it. But such wonders as these have already multiplied upon you; and when evidence is given of their truth, you have resigned your every judgment of the unsearchable God, and rested in the faith of them. I demand, in the name of sound and consistent philosophy, that you do the same in the matter before us—and take it up as a question of evidence—and examine that medium of testimony through which the miracles and informations of the Gospel have come to your door—and go not to admit as argument here, what would not be admitted as argument in any of the analogies of nature and observation—and take along with you in this field of inquiry, a lesson which you should have learned upon other fields—even the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God, that his judgments are unsearchable, and his ways are past finding out.

I do not enter at all into the positive evidence for the

truth of the Christian Revelation, my single aim at present being to dispose of one of the objections which is conceived to stand in the way of it. Let me suppose then that this is done to the satisfaction of a philosophical inquirer, and that the evidence is sustained, and that the same mind that is familiarised to all the sublimities of natural science, and has been in the habit of contemplating God in association with all the magnificence which is around him, shall be brought to submit its thoughts to the captivity of the doctrine of Christ. Oh! with what veneration, and gratitude, and wonder, should he look on the descent of him into this lower world, who made all these things and without whom was not any thing made that was made. What a grandeur does it throw over every step in the redemption of a fallen world, to think of its being done by him who unrobed him of the glories of so wide a monarchy, and came to this humblest of its provinces, in the disguise of a servant, and took upon him the form of our degraded species, and let himself down to sorrows and to sufferings, and to death, for us. In this love of an expiring Saviour to those for whom in agony he poured out his soul, there is a height, and a depth, and a length, and a breadth, more than I can comprehend; and let me never, never from this moment neglect so great a salvation, or lose my hold of an atonement, made sure by him who cried, that it was finished, and brought in an everlasting righteousness. It was not the visit of an empty parade that he made to us. It was for the accomplishment of some substantial purpose; and, if that purpose is announced, and stated to consist in his dying the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God, let us never doubt of our acceptance in that way of communication with our Father in heaven, which he hath opened and made known to us. In taking to that way, let us follow his every direction with that humility which a sense of all this won-

derful condescension is fitted to inspire. Let us forsake all that he bids us forsake. Let us do all that he bids us do. Let us give ourselves up to his guidance with the docility of children, overpowered by a kindness that we never merited, and a love that is unequalled by all the perverseness and all the ingratitude of our stubborn nature—for what shall we render unto him for such mysterious benefits—to him who has thus been mindful of us—to him who thus has deigned to visit us?

But the whole of this argument is not yet exhausted. We have scarcely entered on the defence that is commonly made against the plea which infidelity rests on the wonderful extent of the universe of God, and the insignificancy of our assigned portion of it. The way in which we have attempted to dispose of this plea, is by insisting on the evidence that is every where around us, of God combining with the largeness of a vast and mighty superintendence, which reaches the outskirts of creation, and spreads over all its amplitudes—the faculty of bestowing as much attention, and exercising as complete and manifold a wisdom, and lavishing as profuse and inexhaustible a goodness, on each of its humblest departments, as if it formed the whole extent of his territory.

In the whole of this argument we have looked upon the earth as isolated from the rest of the universe altogether. But according to the way in which the astronomical objection is commonly met, the earth is not viewed as in a state of detachment from the other worlds, and the other orders of being which God has called into existence. It is looked upon as the member of a more extended system. It is associated with the magnificence of a moral empire, as wide as the kingdom of nature. It is not merely asserted, what in our last Discourse has been already done, that for any thing we can know by reason, the plan of redemption may have its influences and its

bearings on those creatures of God who people other regions, and occupy other fields in the immensity of his dominions; that to argue, therefore, on this plan being instituted for the single benefit of the world we live in, and of the species to which we belong, is a mere presumption of the infidel himself; and that the objection he rears on it, must fall to the ground, when the vanity of the presumption is exposed. The Christian apologist thinks he can go further than this—that he cannot merely expose the utter baselessness of the infidel assertion, but that he has positive ground for erecting an opposite and a confronting assertion in its place—and that after having neutralised their position, by showing the entire absence of all observation in its behalf, he can pass on to the distinct and affirmative testimony of the Bible.

We do think that this lays open a very interesting track, not of wild and fanciful, but of most legitimate and sober-minded speculation. And anxious as we are to put every thing that bears upon the Christian argument into all its lights; and fearless as we feel for the result of a most thorough sifting of it; and thinking as we do think it, the foulest scorn that any pigmy philosopher of the day should mince his ambiguous skepticism to a set of giddy and ignorant admirers, or that a half-learned and superficial public should associate with the christian priesthood, the blindness and the bigotry of a sinking cause—with these feelings, we are not disposed to blink a single question that may be started on the subject of the Christian evidences. There is not one of its parts or bearings which needs the shelter of a disguise thrown over it. Let the priests of another faith ply their prudential expedients, and look so wise and so wary in the execution of them. But Christianity stands in a higher and a firmer attitude. The defensive armour of a shrinking or timid policy does not suit her. Hers is the naked majesty of

truth ; and with all the grandeur of age, but with none of its infirmities, has she come down to us, and gathered new strength from the battles she has won in the many controversies of many generations. With such a religion as this there is nothing to hide. All should be above boards. And the broadest light of day should be made fully and freely to circulate throughout all the secrecies. But secrets she has none. To her belong the frankness and the simplicity of conscious greatness ; and whether she grapple it with the pride of philosophy, or stand in fronted opposition to the prejudices of the multitude, she does it upon her own strength, and spurns all the props and all the auxiliaries of superstition away from her.

DISCOURSE IV.

ON THE KNOWLEDGE OF MAN'S MORAL HISTORY IN THE DISTANT PLACES OF CREATION.

"*Which things the angels desire to look into.*" 1 PETER i. 12.

THERE is a limit, across which man cannot carry any one of his perceptions, and from the ulterior of which he cannot gather a single observation to guide or to inform him. While he keeps by the objects which are near, he can get the knowledge of them conveyed to his mind through the ministry of several of the senses. He can feel a substance that is within reach of his hand. He can smell a flower that is presented to him. He can taste the food that is before him. He can hear a sound of certain pitch and intensity; and, so much does this sense of hearing widen his intercourse with external nature, that, from the distance of miles, it can bring him in an occasional intimation.

But of all the tracks of conveyance which God has been pleased to open up between the mind of man, and the theatre by which he is surrounded, there is none by which he so multiplies his acquaintance with the rich and

the varied creation on every side of him, as by the organ of the eye. It is this which gives to him his loftiest command over the scenery of nature. It is this by which so broad a range of observation is submitted to him. It is this which enables him, by the act of a single moment, to send an exploring look over the surface of an ample territory, to crowd his mind with the whole assembly of its objects, and to fill his vision with those countless hues which diversify and adorn it. It is this which carries him abroad over all that is sublime in the immensity of distance; which sets him as it were on an elevated platform, from whence he may cast a surveying glance over the arena of innumerable worlds; which spreads before him so mighty a province of contemplation, that the earth he inhabits, only appears to furnish him with the pedestal on which he may stand, and from which he may descry the wonders of all that magnificence which the Divinity has poured so abundantly around him. It is by the narrow outlet of the eye, that the mind of man takes its excursive flight over those golden tracks, where, in all the exhaustlessness of creative wealth, lie scattered the suns, and the systems of astronomy. But oh! how good a thing it is, and how becoming well, for the philosopher to be humble even amid the proudest march of human discovery, and the sublimest triumphs of the human understanding, when he thinks of that unscaled barrier, beyond which no power, either of eye or of telescope, shall ever carry him: when he thinks that on the other side of it, there is a height, and a depth, and a length, and a breadth, to which the whole of this concave and visible firmament dwindles into the insignificancy of an atom—and above all, how ready should he be to cast his every lofty imagination away from him, when he thinks of the God, who, on the simple foundation of his word, has reared the whole of this stately architecture, and, by the force

of his preserving hand, continues to uphold it; aye, and should the word again come out from him, that this earth shall pass away, and a portion of the heavens which are around it, shall again fall back into the annihilation from which he at first summoned them, what an impressive rebuke does it bring on the swelling vanity of science, to think that the whole field of its most ambitious enterprises may be swept away altogether, and there remain before the eye of him who sitteth on the throne, an untravelled immensity, which he hath filled with innumerable splendours, and over the whole face of which he hath inscribed the evidence of his high attributes, in all their might, and in all their manifestation.

But man has a great deal more to keep him humble of his understanding, than a mere sense of that boundary which skirts and which terminates the material field of his contemplations. He ought also to feel how within that boundary, the vast majority of things is mysterious and unknown to him; that even in the inner chamber of his own consciousness, where so much lies hidden from the observation of others, there is also to himself, a little world of incomprehensibles; that if stepping beyond the limits of this familiar home, he look no further than to the members of his family, there is much in the cast and the colour of every mind that is above his powers of divination; that in proportion as he recedes from the centre of his own personal experience, there is a cloud of ignorance and secrecy, which spreads, and thickens, and throws a deep and impenetrable veil over the intricacies of every one department of human contemplation; that of all around him, his knowledge is naked and superficial, and confined to a few of those more conspicuous lineaments which strike upon his senses; that the whole face both of nature and of society, presents him with questions which he cannot unriddle, and tells him how beneath the surface of all

that the eye can rest upon, there lies the profoundness of a most unsearchable latency; aye, and should he in some lofty enterprise of thought, leave this world, and shoot afar into those tracks of speculation which astronomy has opened—should he, baffled by the mysteries which beset his every footstep upon earth, attempt an ambitious flight towards the mysteries of heaven—let him go, but let the justness of a pious and philosophical modesty go along with him—let him forget not, that from the moment his mind has taken its ascending way for a few little miles above the world he treads upon, his every sense abandons him but one—that number, and motion, and magnitude, and figure, make up all the barrenness of its elementary informations—that these orbs have sent him scarce another message, than told by their feeble glimmering upon his eye, the simple fact of their existence—that he sees not the landscape of other worlds—that he knows not the moral system of any one of them—nor athwart the long and trackless vacancy which lies between, does there fall upon his listening ear, the hum of their mighty populations.

But the knowledge which he cannot fetch up himself from the obscurity of this wondrous but untravelled scene, by the exercise of any one of his own senses, might be fetched to him by the testimony of a competent messenger. Conceive a native of one of these planetary mansions to light upon our world, and all we should require, would be, to be satisfied of his credentials, that we may tack our faith to every point of information he had to offer us. With the solitary exception of what we have been enabled to gather by the instruments of astronomy, there is not one of his communications about the place he came from, on which we possess any means at all of confronting him; and, therefore, could he only appear before us invested with the characters of truth, we should never

think of any thing else than taking up the whole matter of his testimony just as he brought it to us.

It were well had a sound philosophy schooled its professing disciples to the same kind of acquiescence in another message, which has actually come to the world; and has told us of matters still more remote from every power of unaided observation; and has been sent from a more sublime and mysterious distance, even from that God of whom it is said, that "clouds and darkness are the habitation of his throne;" and treating of a theme so lofty and so inaccessible, as the counsels of that Eternal Spirit, "Whose goings forth are of old, even from everlasting," challenges of man that he should submit his every thought to the authority of this high communication. Oh! had the philosophers of the day known as well as their great Master, how to draw the vigorous land-mark which verges the field of legitimate discovery, they should have seen when it is that philosophy becomes vain, and science is falsely so called: and how it is, that when philosophy is true to her principles, she shuts up her faithful votary to the Bible, and makes him willing to count all but loss, for the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and of him crucified.

But let it be well observed, that the object of this message is not to convey information to us about the state of these planetary regions. This is not the matter with which it is fraught. It is a message from the throne of God to this rebellious province of his dominions; and the purpose of it is, to reveal the fearful extent of our guilt and of our danger, and to lay before us the overtures of reconciliation. Were a similar message sent from the metropolis of a mighty empire, to one of its remote and revolutionary districts, we should not look to it for much information about the state or economy of the intermediate provinces. This were a departure from the topic on

hand—though still there may chance to be some incidental allusions to the extent and resources of the whole monarchy, to the existence of a similar spirit of rebellion in other quarters of the land, or to the general principle of loyalty by which it was pervaded. Some casual references of this kind may be inserted in such a proclamation, or they may not—and it is with this precise feeling of ambiguity that we open the record of that embassy which has been sent us from heaven, to see if we can gather any thing there, about other places of the creation, to meet the objections of the infidel astronomer. But, while we pursue this object, let us have a care not to push the speculation beyond the limits of the written testimony; let us keep a just and a steady eye on the actual boundary of our knowledge, that, throughout every distinct step of our argument, we might preserve that chaste and unambitious spirit, which characterizes the philosophy of him who explored these distant heavens, and, by the force of his genius, unravelled the secret of that wondrous mechanism which upholds them.

The informations of the Bible upon this subject, are of two sorts—that from which we confidently gather the fact, that the history of the redemption of our species is known in other and distant places of the creation—and that, from which we indistinctly guess at the fact, that the redemption itself may stretch beyond the limits of the world we occupy.

And, here it may shortly be adverted to, that, though we know little or nothing of the moral and theological economy of the other planets, we are not to infer, that the beings who occupy these widely extended regions, even though not higher than we in the scale of understanding, know little of ours. Our first parents, ere they committed that act by which they brought themselves and their posterity into the need of redemption, had frequent and

familiar intercourse with God. He walked with them in the garden of paradise; and there did angels hold their habitual converse; and, should the same unblotted innocence which charmed and attracted these superior beings to the haunts of Eden, be perpetuated in every planet but our own, then might each of them be the scene of high and heavenly communications, and an open way for the messengers of God be kept up with them all, and their inhabitants be admitted to a share in the themes and contemplations of angels, and have their spirits exercised on those things, of which we are told that the angels desired to look into them; and thus, as we talk of the public mind of a city, or the public mind of an empire—by the well-frequented avenues of a free and ready circulation, a public mind might be formed throughout the whole extent of God's sinless and intelligent creation—and, just as we often read of the eyes of all Europe being turned to the one spot where some affair of eventful importance is going on, there might be the eyes of a whole universe turned to the one world, where rebellion against the Majesty of heaven had planted its standard; and for the readmission of which within the circle of his fellowship, God, whose justice was inflexible, but whose mercy he had, by some plan of mysterious wisdom, made to rejoice over it, was putting forth all the might, and travailing in all the greatness of the attributes which belonged to him.

But, for the full understanding of this argument, it must be remarked, that, while in our exiled habitation, where all is darkness and rebellion, and enmity, the creature engrosses every heart, and our affections, when they shift at all, only wander from one fleeting vanity to another, it is not so in the habitations of the unfallen. There, every desire and every movement is subordinated to God. He is seen in all that formed, and in all that is spread around them—and, amid the fullness of that de-

light with which they expatiate over the good and the fair of this wondrous universe, the animating charm which pervades their every contemplation, is that they behold, on each visible thing, the impress of the mind that conceived, and of the hand that made and that upholds it. Here, God is banished from the thoughts of every natural man, and by a firm and constantly maintained act of usurpation, do the things of sense and of time wield an entire ascendency. There, God is all in all. They walk in his light. They rejoice in the beatitudes of his presence. The veil is from off their eyes, and they see the character of a presiding Divinity in every scene, and in every event to which the Divinity has given birth. It is this which stamps a glory and an importance on the whole field of their contemplations; and when they see a new evolution in the history of created things, the reason they bend towards it so attentive an eye, is, that it speaks to their understanding some new evolution in the purposes of God; some new manifestation of his high attributes—some new and interesting step in the history of his sublime administration.

Now, we ought to be aware how it takes off, not from the intrinsic weight, but from the actual impression of our argument, that this devotedness to God which reigns in other places of the creation, this interest in him as the constant and essential principle of all enjoyment; this concern in the untaintedness of his glory; this delight in the survey of his perfections and his doings, are what the men of our corrupt and darkened world cannot sympathize with.

But however little we may enter into it, the Bible tells us by many intimations, that among those creatures who have not fallen from their allegiance, nor departed from the living God, God is their all—that love to him sits enthroned in their hearts, and fills them with all the ecstasy

of an overwhelming affection—that a sense of grandeur never so elevates their souls, as when they look at the might and majesty of the Eternal—that no field of cloudless transparency so enchants them by the blissfulness of its visions, as when at the shrine of infinite and unspotted holiness, they bend themselves in raptured adoration—that no beauty so fascinates and attracts them, as does that moral beauty which throws a softening lustre over the awfulness of the Godhead—in a word, that the image of his character is ever present to their contemplations, and the unceasing joy of their sinless existence lies in the knowledge and the admiration of the Deity.

Let us put forth an effort, and keep a steady hold of this consideration, for the deadness of our earthly imaginations makes an effort necessary; and we shall perceive, that though the world we live in were the alone theatre of redemption, there is a something in the redemption itself that is fitted to draw the eye of an arrested universe towards it. Surely, surely, where delight in God is the constant enjoyment, and the earnest intelligent contemplation of God is the constant exercise, there is nothing in the whole compass of nature or of history, that can so set his adoring myriads upon the gaze, as some new and wondrous evolution of the character of God. Now this is found in the plan of our redemption; nor, do I see how in any transaction between the great Father of existence, and the children who have sprung from him, the moral attributes of the Deity could, if I may so express myself, be put to so severe and so delicate a test. It is true, that the great matters of sin and of salvation fall without impression, on the heavy ears of a listless and alienated world. But they who, to use the language of the Bible, are light in the Lord, look otherwise at these things. They see sin in all its malignity, and salvation in all its mysterious greatness. Aye, and it would put

them on the stretch of all their faculties, when they saw rebellion lifting up its standard against the Majesty of heaven, and the truth and the justice of God embarked on the threatenings he had uttered against all the doers of iniquity, and the honors of that august throne, which has the firm pillars of immutability to rest upon, linked with the fulfilment of the law that had come out from it; and when nothing else was looked for, but that God by putting forth the power of his wrath should accomplish his every denunciation, and vindicate the inflexibility of his government, and by one sweeping deed of vengeance, assert in the sight of all his creatures, the sovereignty which belonged to him—Oh! with what desire must they have pondered on his ways, when amid the urgency of all these demands which looked so high and so indispensable, they saw the unfoldings of the attribute of mercy—and how the supreme Lawgiver was bending upon his guilty creatures an eye of tenderness—and how in his profound and unsearchable wisdom, he was devising for them some plan of restoration—and how the eternal Son had to move from his dwelling-place in heaven, to carry it forward through all the difficulties by which it was encompassed—and how, after, by the virtue of his mysterious sacrifice, he had magnified the glory of every other perfection, he made mercy rejoice over them all, and threw open a way by which we sinful and polluted wanderers might, with the whole lustre of the Divine character untarnished, be readmitted into fellowship with God, and be again brought back within the circle of his loyal and affectionate family.

Now, the essential character of such a transaction, viewed as a manifestation of God, does not hang upon the number of worlds, over which this sin and this salvation may have extended. We know that over this one world such an economy of wisdom and of mercy is instituted—and, even should this be the only world that is embraced

by it, the moral display of the Godhead is mainly and substantially the same, as if it reached throughout the whole of that habitable extent which the science of astronomy has made known to us. By the disobedience of this one world, the law was trampled on; and, in the business of making truth and mercy to meet, and have a harmonious accomplishment on the men of this world, the dignity of God was put to the same trial; the justice of God appeared to lay the same immoveable barrier; the wisdom of God had to clear a way through the same difficulties; the forgiveness of God had to find the same mysterious conveyance to the sinners of a solitary world, as to the sinners of half a universe. The extent of the field upon which this question was decided, has no more influence on the question itself, than the figure or the dimensions of that field of combat, on which some great political question was fought, has on the importance or on the moral principles of the controversy that gave rise to it. This objection about the narrowness of the theatre, carries along with it all the grossness of materialism. To the eye of spiritual and intelligent beings, it is nothing. In their view, the redemption of a sinful world derives its chief interest from the display it gives of the mind and purposes of the Deity—and, should that world be but a single speck in the immensity of the works of God, the only way in which this affects their estimate of him, is to magnify his loving kindness—who rather than lose one solitary world of the myriads he has formed, would lavish all the riches of his beneficence and of his wisdom on the recovery of its guilty population.

Now, though it must be admitted that the Bible does not speak clearly or decisively as to the proper effect of redemption being extended to other worlds; it speaks most clearly and most decisively about the knowledge of it being disseminated among other orders of created intelli-

gence than our own. But if the contemplation of God be their supreme enjoyment, then the very circumstance of our redemption being known to them, may invest it, even though it be but the redemption of one solitary world, with an importance as wide as the universe itself. It may spread among the hosts of immensity a new illustration of the character of Him who is all their praise, and looking toward whom every energy within them is moved to the exercise of a deep and delighted admiration. The scene of the transaction may be narrow in point of material extent; while in the transaction itself there may be such a moral dignity, as to blazon the perfections of the Godhead over the face of creation; and from the manifested glory of the Eternal, to send forth a tide of ecstacy, and of high gratulation, throughout the whole extent of his dependent provinces.

I will not, in proof of the position, that the history of our redemption is known in other and distant places of creation, and is matter of deep interest and feeling among other orders of created intelligence—I will not put down all the quotations which might be assembled together upon this argument. It is an impressive circumstance, that when Moses and Elias made a visit to our Saviour on the mount of transfiguration, and appeared in glory from heaven, the topic they brought along with them, and with which they were fraught, was the decease he was going to accomplish at Jerusalem. And however insipid the things of our salvation may be to an earthly understanding; we are made to know, that in the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which should follow, there is matter to attract the notice of celestial spirits, for these are the very things, says the Bible, which angels desire to look into. And however listlessly we, the dull and grovelling children of an exiled family, may feel about the perfections of the Godhead, and the display of those perfections in

the economy of the Gospel, it is intimated to us in the book of God's message, that the creation has its districts and its provinces; and we accordingly read of thrones, and dominions, and principalities, and powers; and whether these terms denote the separate regions of government, or the beings who, by a commission granted from the sanctuary of heaven, sit in delegated authority over them —even in their eyes the mystery of Christ stands arrayed in all the splendour of unsearchable riches; for we are told that this mystery was revealed for the very intent, that unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be made known by the church, the manifold wisdom of God. And while we, whose prospect reaches not beyond the narrow limits of the corner we occupy, look on the dealings of God in the world, as carrying in them all the insignificancy of a provincial transaction; God himself, whose eye reaches to places which our eye hath not seen, nor our ear heard of, neither hath it entered into the imagination of our heart to conceive, stamps a universality on the whole matter of the christian salvation, by such revelations as the following: That he is to gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are in earth, even in him—and that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth—and that by him God reconciled all things unto himself, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

We will not say in how far some of these passages extend the proper effect of that redemption which is by Christ Jesus, to other quarters of the universe of God; but they at least go to establish a widely disseminated knowledge of this transaction among the other orders of created intelligence. And they give us a distant glimpse of something more extended. They present a faint opening, through which may be seen some few traces of a

wider and a nobler dispensation. They bring before us a dim transparency, on the other side of which the images of an obscure magnificence dazzle indistinctly upon the eye ; and tell us that in the economy of redemption, there is a grandeur commensurate to all that is known of the other works and purposes of the Eternal. They offer us no details ; and man, who ought not to attempt a wisdom above that which is written, should never put forth his hand to the drapery of that impenetrable curtain which God in his mysterious wisdom has spread over those ways, of which it is but a very small portion that we know of them. But certain it is, that we know as much of them from the Bible ; and the Infidel, with all the pride of his boasted astronomy, knows so little of them, from any power of observation, that the baseless argument of his, on which we have dwelt so long, is overborne in the light of all that positive evidence which God has poured around the record of his own testimony, and even in the light of its more obscure and casual intimations.

The minute and variegated details of the way in which this wondrous economy is extended, God has chosen to withhold from us ; but he has oftener than once made to us a broad and a general announcement of its dignity. He does not tell us whether the fountain opened in the house of Judah, for sin and for uncleanness, send forth its healing streams to other worlds than our own. He does not tell us the extent of the atonement. But he tells us that the atonement itself, known as it is among the myriads of the celestial, forms the high song of eternity ; that the Lamb who was slain, is surrounded by the acclamations of one wide and universal empire ; that the might of his wondrous achievements, spreads a tide of gratulation over the multitudes who are about his throne ; and that there never ceases to ascend from the worshippers of him who washed us from our sins in his blood, a voice loud as from

numbers without number, sweet as from blessed voices uttering joy, when heaven rings jubilee, and loud hosannas fill the eternal regions.

"And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and glory, and honour, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever."

A king might have the whole of his reign crowded with the enterprises of glory; and by the might of his arms, and the wisdom of his counsels might win the first reputation among the potentates of the world; and be idolized throughout all his provinces, for the wealth and the security that he had spread around them—and still it is conceivable, that by the act of a single day in behalf of a single family; by some soothing visitation of tenderness to a poor and solitary cottage; by some deed of compassion, which conferred enlargement and relief on one despairing sufferer; by some graceful movement of sensibility at a tale of wretchedness; by some noble effort of self-denial, in virtue of which he subdued his every purpose of revenge, and spread the mantle of a generous oblivion over the fault of the man who has insulted and aggrieved him; above all, by an exercise of pardon so skilfully administered, as that instead of bringing him down to a state of defencelessness against the provocation of future injuries, it threw a deeper sacredness over him, and stamped a more inviolable dignity than ever on his person and character:—why, my brethren, on the strength of one

such performance done in a single hour, and reaching no further in its immediate effects than to one house, or to one individual, it is a most possible thing, that the highest monarch upon earth might draw such a lustre around him as would eclipse the renown of all his public achievements—and that such a display of magnanimity, or of worth, beaming from the secrecy of his familiar moments, might waken a more cordial veneration in every bosom, than all the splendour of his conspicuous history—aye, and that it might pass down to posterity, as a more enduring monument of greatness, and raise him further by its moral elevation above the level of ordinary praise; and when he passes in review before the men of distant ages, may this deed of modest, gentle, unobtrusive virtue, be at all times appealed to, as the most sublime and touching memorial of his name.

In like manner did the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, surrounded as he is with the splendours of a wide and everlasting monarchy, turn him to our humble habitation; and the footsteps of God manifest in the flesh, have been on the narrow spot of ground we occupy; and small though our mansion be, amid the orbs and the systems of immensity, hither hath the King of glory bent his mysterious way, and entered the tabernacle of men, and in the disguise of a servant did he sojourn for years under the roof which canopies our obscure and solitary world. Yes, it is but a twinkling atom in the peopled infinity of worlds that are around it—but look to the moral grandeur of the transaction, and not to the material extent of the field upon which it was executed—and from the retirement of our dwelling-place, there may issue forth such a display of the Godhead, as will circulate the glories of his name among all his worshippers. Here sin entered. Here was the kind and universal beneficence of a Father, repaid by the ingratitude of a whole family.

Here the law of God was dishonoured, and that too in the face of its proclaimed and unalterable sanctions. Here the mighty contest of the attributes was ended—and when justice put forth its demands, and truth called for the fulfilment of its warnings, and the immutability of God would not recede by a single iota, from any one of its positions, and all the severities he had ever uttered against the children of iniquity, seemed to gather into one cloud of threatening vengeance on the tenement that held us—did the visit of the only-begotten Son chase away all these obstacles to the triumph of mercy—and humble as the tenement may be, deeply shaded in the obscurity of insignificance as it is, among the statelier mansions which are on every side of it—yet will the recal of its exiled family never be forgotten—and the illustration that has been given here, of the mingled grace and majesty of God, will never lose its place among the themes and the acclamations of eternity.

And here it may be remarked, that as the earthly king who throws a moral aggrandizement around him, by the act of a single day, finds, that after its performance, he may have the space of many years for gathering to himself the triumphs of an extended reign—so the King who sits on high, and with whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day, will find, that after the period of that special administration is ended, by which this strayed world is again brought back within the limits of his favoured creation, there is room enough along the mighty track of eternity, for accumulating upon himself a glory as wide and as universal as is the extent of his dominions. You will allow the most illustrious of this world's potentates, to give some hour of his private history to a deed of cottage or of domestic tenderness; and every time you think of the interesting story, you will feel how sweetly and how gracefully the remembrance of it blends itself with the

fame of his public achievements. But still you think that there would not have been room enough for these achievements of his, had much of his time been spent, either among the habitations of the poor, or in the retirement of his own family; and you conceive, that it is because a single day bears so small a proportion to the time of his whole history, that he has been able to combine an interesting display of private worth, with all that brilliancy of exhibition, which has brought him down to posterity in the character of an august and a mighty sovereign.

Now apply this to the matter before us. Had the history of our redemption been confined within the limits of a single day, the argument that infidelity has drawn from the multitude of other worlds, would never have been offered. It is true, that ours is but an insignificant portion of the territory of God—but if the attentions by which he has signalised it, had only taken up a single day, this would never have occurred to us as forming any sensible withdrawment of the mind of the Deity from the concerns of his vast and universal government. It is the time which the plan of our salvation requires, that startles all those on whom this argument has any impression. It is the time taken up about this paltry world, which they feel to be out of proportion to the number of other worlds, and to the immensity of the surrounding creation. Now, to meet this impression, I do not insist at present on what I have already brought forward, that God, whose ways are not as our ways, can have his eye at the same instant on every place, and can divide and diversify his attention into any number of distinct exercises. What I have now to remark, is, that the infidel who urges the astronomical objection to the truth of Christianity, is only looking with half an eye to the principle on which it rests. Carry out the principle, and the objection vanishes. He looks abroad on the immensity of space, and tells us how im-

possible it is, that this narrow corner of it can be so distinguished by the attentions of the Deity. Why does he not also look abroad on the magnificence of eternity; and perceive how the whole period of these peculiar attentions, how the whole time which elapses between the fall of man and the consummation of the scheme of his recovery, is but the twinkling of a moment to the mighty roll of innumerable ages? The whole interval between the time of Jesus Christ's leaving his Father's abode, to sojourn among us, to that time when he shall have put all his enemies under his feet, and delivered up the kingdom to God, even his Father, that God may be all in all; the whole of this interval bears as small a proportion to the whole of the Almighty's reign, as this solitary world does to the universe around it, and an infinitely smaller proportion than any time, however short, which an earthly monarch spends on some enterprise of private benevolence, does to the whole walk of his public and recorded history.

Why then does not the man, who can shoot his conceptions so sublimely abroad over the field of an immensity that knows no limits—why does he not also shoot them forward through the vista of a succession, that ever flows without stop and without termination? He has burst across the confines of this world's habitation in space, and out of the field which lies on the other side of it, has he gathered an argument against the truth of revelation. I feel that I have nothing to do but to burst across the confines of this world's history in time and out of the futurity which lies beyond it, can I gather that which will blow the argument to pieces, or stamp upon it all the narrowness of a partial and mistaken calculation. The day is coming, when the whole of this wondrous history shall be looked back upon by the eye of remembrance, and be regarded as one incident in the extended annals of crea-

tion, and with all the illustration and all the glory it has thrown on the character of the Deity, will it be seen as a single step in the evolution of his designs; and long as the time may appear, from the first act of our redemption to its final accomplishment, and close and exclusive as we may think the attentions of God upon it, it will be found that it has left him room enough for all his concerns, and that on the high scale of eternity, it is but one of those passing and ephemeral transactions, which crowd the history of a never-ending administration.

DISCOURSE V.

ON THE SYMPATHY THAT IS FELT FOR MAN IN THE DISTANT PLACES OF CREATION.

"*I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.*"—LUKE XV. 7.

I HAVE already attempted at full length to establish the position, that the infidel argument of astronomers goes to expunge a natural perfection from the character of God, even that wondrous property of his, by which he, at the same instant of time, can bend a close and a careful attention on a countless diversity of objects, and diffuse the intimacy of his power and of his presence, from the greatest to the minutest and most insignificant of them all. I also adverted shortly to this other circumstance, that it went to impair a moral attribute of the Deity. It goes to impair the benevolence of his nature. It is saying much for the benevolence of God, to say, that a single world, or a single system, is not enough for it—that it must have the spread of a mightier region, on which it may pour forth a tide of

exuberancy throughout all its provinces—that as far as our vision can carry us, it has strewed immensity with the floating receptacles of life, and has stretched over each of them the graniture of such a sky as mantles our own habitation—and that even from distances which are far beyond the reach of human eye, the songs of gratitude and praise may now be arising to the one God, who sits surrounded by the regards of his one great and universal family.

Now it is saying much for the benevolence of God, to say that it sends forth these wide and distant emanations over the surface of a territory so ample, that the world we inhabit, lying imbedded as it does amidst so much surrounding greatness, shrinks into a point that to the universal eye might appear to be almost imperceptible. But does it not add to the power and to the perfection of this universal eye, that at the very moment it is taking a comprehensive survey of the vast, it can fasten a steady and undistracted attention on each minute and separate portion of it; that at the very moment it is looking at all worlds, it can look most pointedly and most intelligently to each of them; that at the very moment it sweeps the field of immensity, it can settle all the earnestness of its regards upon every distinct hand-breadth of that field; that at the very moment at which it embraces the totality of existence, it can send a most thorough and penetrating inspection into each of its details, and into every one of its endless diversities? You cannot fail to perceive how much this adds to the power of the all-seeing eye. Tell me then, if it do not add as much perfection to the benevolence of God, that while it is expatiating over the vast field of created things, there is not one portion of the field overlooked by it; that while it scatters blessings over the whole of an infinite range, it causes them to descend in a shower of plenty on every separate habitation; that while his

arm is underneath and round about all worlds, he enters within the precincts of every one of them, and gives a care and a tenderness to each individual of their teeming population. Oh! does not the God, who is said to be love, shed over this attribute of his its finest illustration, when, while he sits in the highest heaven, and pours out his fulness on the whole subordinate domain of nature and of providence, he bows a pitying regard on the very humblest of his children, and sends his reviving Spirit into every heart, and cheers by his presence every home, and provides for the wants of every family, and watches every sick-bed, and listens to the complaints of every sufferer; and while, by his wondrous mind the weight of universal government is borne, oh! is it not more wondrous and more excellent still, that he feels for every sorrow, and has an ear open to every prayer?

"It doth not yet appear what we shall be," says the apostle John, "but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." It is the present lot of the angels, that they behold the face of our Father in heaven, and it would seem as if the effect of this was to form and to perpetuate in them the moral likeness of himself, and that they reflect back upon him his own image, and that thus a diffused resemblance to the Godhead is kept up among all those adoring worshippers who live in the near and rejoicing contemplation of the Godhead. Mark then how that peculiar and endearing feature in the goodness of the Deity, which we have just now adverted to—mark how beauteously it is reflected downwards upon us in the revealed attitude of angels. From the high eminences of heaven, are they bending a wakeful regard over the men of this sinful world; and the repentance of every one of them spreads a joy and a high gratulation throughout all its dwelling places. Put this trait of the angelic character into con-

trast with the dark and louring spirit of an infidel. He is told of the multitude of other worlds, and he feels a kindling magnificence in the conception, and he is seduced by an elevation which he cannot carry, and from this airy summit does he look down on the insignificance of the world we occupy, and pronounces it to be unworthy of those visits and of those attentions which we read of in the New Testament. He is unable to wing his upward way along the scale, either of moral or of natural perfection; and when the wonderful extent of the field is made known to him, over which the wealth of the Divinity is lavished—there he stops, and wilders, and altogether misses this essential perception, that the power and perfection of the Divinity are not more displayed by the mere magnitude of the field, than they are by that minute and exquisite filling up, which leaves not its smallest portions neglected; but which imprints the fulness of the Godhead upon every one of them; and proves, by every flower of the pathless desert, as well as by every orb of immensity, how this unsearchable Being can care for all, and provide for all, and throned in mystery too high for us, can, throughout every instant of time, keep his attentive eye on every separate thing that he has formed, and by an act of his thoughtful and presiding intelligence, can constantly embrace all.

But God, compassed about as he is with light inaccessible, and full of glory, lies so hidden from the ken and conception of all our faculties, that the spirit of man sinks exhausted by its attempts to comprehend him. Could the image of the Supreme be placed direct before the eye of the mind, that flood of splendour, which is ever issuing from him on all who have the privilege of beholding, would not only dazzle, but overpower us. And, therefore it is, that I bid you look to the reflection of that image, and thus to take a view of its mitigated glories, and

to gather the lineaments of the Godhead in the face of those righteous angels, who have never thrown away from them the resemblance in which they were created; and, unable as you are to support the grace and the majesty of that countenance, before which the sons and the prophets of other days fell, and became as dead men, let us, before we bring this argument to a close, borrow one lesson of Him who sitteth on the throne, from the aspect and the revealed doings of those who are surrounding it.

The infidel, then, as he widens the field of his contemplations, would suffer its every separate object to die away into forgetfulness: these angels, expatiating as they do over the range of a loftier universality, are represented as all awake to the history of each of its distinct and subordinate provinces. The infidel, with his mind afloat among suns and among systems, can find no place in his already occupied regards, for that humble planet which lodges and accommodates our species: the angels, standing on a loftier summit, and with a mightier prospect of creation before them, are yet represented as looking down on this single world, and attentively marking the every feeling and the every demand of all its families. The infidel, by sinking us down to an unnoticeable minuteness, would lose sight of our dwelling-place altogether, and spread a darkening shroud of oblivion over all the concerns and all the interests of men; but the angels will not so abandon us; and undazzled by the whole surpassing grandeur of that scenery which is around them, are they revealed as directing all the fulness of their regard to this our habitation, and casting a longing and benignant eye on ourselves and on our children. The infidel will tell us of those worlds which roll afar, and the number of which outstrips the arithmetic of the human understanding—and then with the hardness of an unfeeling calculation, will he consign the one we occupy, with all

its guilty generations, to despair. But He who counts the number of the stars, is set forth to us as looking at every inhabitant among the millions of our species, and by the word of the Gospel beckoning to him with the hand of invitation, and on the very first step of his return, as moving towards him with all the eagerness of the prodigal's father, to receive him back again into that presence from which he had wandered. And as to this world, in favour of which the scowling infidel will not permit one solitary movement, all heaven is represented as in a stir about its restoration; and there cannot a single son or a single daughter be recalled from sin unto righteousness, without an acclamation of joy among the hosts of paradise. Aye, and I can say it of the humblest and the unworthiest of you all, that the eye of angels is upon him, and that his repentance would at this moment, send forth a wave of delighted sensibility throughout the mighty throng of their innumerable legions.

Now, the single question I have to ask, is, On which of the two sides of this contrast do we see most of the impress of heaven? Which of the two would be most glorifying to God? Which of them carries upon it most of that evidence which lies in its having a celestial character? For if it be the side of the infidel, then must all our hopes expire with the ratifying of that fatal sentence, by which the world is doomed, through its insignificancy, to perpetual exclusion from the attentions of the Godhead. I have long been knocking at the door of your understanding, and have tried to find an admittance to it for many an argument. I now make my appeal to the sensibilities of your heart; and tell me, to whom does the moral feeling within it yield its readiest testimony—to the infidel, who would make this world of ours vanish away into abandonment—or to those angels, who ring throughout

all their mansions the hosannas of joy, over every one individual of its repentant population?

And here I cannot omit to take advantage of that opening with which our Saviour has furnished us, by the parables of this chapter, and admits us into a familiar view of that principle on which the inhabitants of heaven are so awake to the deliverance and the restoration of our species. To illustrate the difference in the reach of knowledge and of affection, between a man and an angel, let us think of the difference of reach between one man and another. You may often witness a man, who feels neither tenderness nor care beyond the precincts of his own family; but who, on the strength of those instinctive fondnesses which nature has implanted in his bosom, may earn the character of an amiable father, or a kind husband, or a bright example of all that is soft and endearing in the relations of domestic society. Now, conceive him, in addition to all this, to carry his affections abroad, without, at the same time, any abatement of their intensity towards the objects which are at home—that, stepping across the limits of the house he occupies, he takes an interest in the families which are near him—that he lends his services to the town or the district wherein he is placed, and gives up a portion of his time to the thoughtful labours of a humane and public-spirited citizen. By this enlargement in the sphere of his attention he has extended his reach; and, provided he has not done so at the expense of that regard which is due to his family—a thing which, cramped and confined as we are, we are very apt, in the exercise of our humble faculties, to do—I put it to you, whether, by extending the reach of his views and his affections, he has not extended his worth and his moral respectability along with it?

But I can conceive a still further enlargement. I can figure to myself a man, whose wakeful sympathy

overflows the field of his own immediate neighbourhood —to whom the name of country comes with all the omnipotence of a charm upon his heart, and with all the urgency of a most righteous and resistless claim upon his services—who never hears the name of Britain sounded in his ears, but it stirs up all his enthusiasm in behalf of the worth and the welfare of its people—who gives himself up, with all the devotedness of a passion, to the best and the purest objects of patriotism—and who, spurning away from him the vulgarities of party ambition, separates his life and his labours to the fine pursuit of augmenting the science, or the virtue, or the substantial prosperity of his nation. Oh! could such a man retain all the tenderness, and fulfil all the duties which home and which neighbourhood require of him, and at the same time expatiate, in the might of his untired faculties, on so wide a field of benevolent contemplation—would not this extension of reach place him still higher than before, on the scale both of moral and intellectual gradation, and give him a still brighter and more enduring name in the records of human excellence?

And, lastly, I can conceive a still loftier flight of humanity—a man, the aspiring of whose heart for the good of man, knows no limitations—whose longings, and whose conceptions on this subject, overleap all the barriers of geography—who, looking on himself as a brother of the species, links every spare energy which belongs to him with the cause of its melioration—who can embrace within the grasp of his ample desires the whole family of mankind—and who, in obedience to a heaven-born movement of principle within him, separates himself to some big and busy enterprise, which is to tell on the moral destinies of the world. Oh! could such a man mix up the softenings of private virtue with the habit of so sublime a comprehension—if, amid those magnificent darings of

PACIFIC SCHOOL OF RELIGION

thought and of performance, the mildness of his benignant eye could still continue to cheer the retreat of his family, and to spend the charm and the sacredness of piety among all its members—could he even mingle himself, in all the gentleness of a soothed and a smiling heart, with the playfulness of his children—and also find strength to shed the blessings of his presence and his counsel over the vicinity around him ;—oh ! would not the combination of so much grace with so much loftiness, only serve the more to aggrandize him ? Would not the one ingredient of a character so rare, go to illustrate and to magnify the other ? And would not you pronounce him to be the fairest specimen of our nature, who could so call out all your tenderness, while he challenged and compelled all your veneration ?

Nor can I proceed, at this point of my argument, without adverting to the way in which this last and this largest style of benevolence is exemplified in our own country—where the spirit of the Gospel has given to many of its enlightened disciples the impulse of such a philanthropy, as carries abroad their wishes and their endeavours to the very outskirts of human population—a philanthropy, of which, if you asked the extent or the boundary of its field, we should answer, in the language of inspiration, that the field is the world—a philanthropy, which overlooks all the distinctions of cast and of colour, and spreads its ample regards over the whole brotherhood of the species—a philanthropy, which attaches itself to man in the general ; to man throughout all his varieties ; to man as the partaker of one common nature, and who, in whatever clime or latitude you may meet with him, is found to breathe the same sympathies, and to possess the same high capabilities both of bliss and improvement. It is true that, upon this subject, there is often a loose and unsettled magnificence of thought, which is fruitful of no-

thing but empty speculation. But the men to whom I allude have not imaged the enterprise in the form of a thing unknown. They have given it a local habitation. They have bodied it forth in deed and in accomplishment. They have turned the dream into a reality. In them, the power of a lofty generalization meets with its happiest attemperament in the principle and perseverance, and all the chastening and subduing virtues of the New Testament. And, were I in search of that fine union of grace and of greatness, which I have now been insisting on, and in virtue of which the enlightened Christian can at once find room in his bosom for the concerns of universal humanity, and for the play of kindliness towards every individual he meets with—I could nowhere more readily expect to find it, than with the worthies of our own land —the Howard of a former generation, who paced it over Europe in quest of the unseen wretchedness, which abounds in it;—or in such men of our present generation as Wilberforce, who lifted his unwearied voice against the biggest outrage ever practised on our nature, till he wrought its extermination; and Clarkson, who plied his assiduous task at rearing the materials of its impressive history, and at length carried, for this righteous cause, the mind of Parliament; and Carey, from whose hand the generations of the East are now receiving the elements of their moral renovation; and, in fine, those holy and devoted men, who count not their lives dear unto them; but, going forth every year from the island of our habitation, carry the message of heaven over the face of the world; and in the front of severest obloquy are now labouring in remotest lands; and are reclaiming another and another portion from the wastes of dark and fallen humanity; and are widening the domains of gospel light and gospel principle among them; and are spreading a moral beauty

around the every spot on which they pitch their lowly tabernacle; and are at length compelling even the eye and the testimony of gainsayers, by the success of their noble enterprise; and are forcing the exclamation of delighted surprise from the charmed and the arrested traveller, as he looks at the softening tints which they are now spreading over the wilderness, and as he hears the sound of the chapel bell, and as in those haunts where, at the distance of half a generation, savages would have scowled upon his path he regales himself with the hum of missionary schools, and the lovely spectacle of peaceful and christian villages.

Such, then, is the benevolence, at once so gentle and so lofty, of those men, who, sanctified by the faith that is in Jesus, have had their hearts visited from heaven by a beam of warmth and of sacredness. What, then, I should like to know, is the benevolence of the place from whence such an influence cometh? How wide is the compass of this virtue there, and how exquisite is the feeling of its tenderness, and how pure and how fervent are its aspirings among those unfallen beings who have no darkness, and no encumbering weight of corruption to strive against? Angels have a mightier reach of contemplation. Angels can look upon this world, and all which it inherits, as the part of a larger family. Angels were in the full exercise of their powers even at the first infancy of our species, and shared in the gratulations of that period, when at the birth of humanity all intelligent nature felt a gladdening impulse, and the morning stars sang together for joy. They loved us even with the love which a family on earth bears to a younger sister; and the very childhood of our tinier faculties did only serve the more to endear us to them; and though born at a later hour in the history of creation, did they regard us as heirs of the same destiny with themselves, to rise along with them in

the scale of moral elevation, to bow at the same footstool and to partake in those high dispensations of a parent's kindness and a parent's care, which are ever emanating from the throne of the Eternal on all the members of a duteous and affectionate family. Take the reach of an angel's mind, but, at the same time take the seraphic fervour of an angel's benevolence along with it; how, from the eminence on which he stands he may have an eye upon many worlds, and a remembrance upon the origin and the successive concerns of every one of them; how he may feel the full force of a most affecting relationship with the inhabitants of each, as the offspring of one common Father; and though it be both the effect and the evidence of our depravity, that we cannot sympathise with these pure and generous ardours of a celestial spirit; how it may consist with the lofty comprehension, and the ever-breathing love of an angel, that he can both shoot his benevolence abroad over a mighty expanse of planets and of systems, and lavish a flood of tenderness on each individual of their teeming population.

Keep all this in view, and you cannot fail to perceive how the principle, so finely and so copiously illustrated in this chapter, may be brought to meet the infidelity we have thus long been employed in combating. It was nature, and the experience of every bosom will affirm it—it was nature in the shepherd to leave the ninety and nine of his flock forgotten and alone in the wilderness, and betaking himself to the mountains, to give all his labour and all his concern to the pursuit of one solitary wanderer. It was nature; and we are told in the passage before us, that it is such a portion of nature as belongs not merely to men, but to angels; when the woman, with her mind in a state of listlessness as to the nine pieces of silver that were in secure custody, turned the whole force of her anxiety to the one piece which she had lost, and for which she

had to light a candle, and to sweep the house, and to search diligently until she found it. It was nature in her to rejoice more over that piece, than over all the rest of them, and to tell it abroad among friends and neighbours, that they might rejoice along with her—aye, and sadly effaced as humanity is, in all her original lineaments, this is a part of our nature, the very movements of which are experienced in heaven, "where there is more joy over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance." For any thing I know, the every planet that rolls in the immensity around me, may be a land of righteousness; and be a member of the household of God; and have her secure dwelling-place within that ample limit, which embraces his great and universal family. But I know at least of one wanderer; and how wofully she has strayed from peace and from purity; and how in dreary alienation from him who made her, she has bewildered herself among those many devious tracts, which have carried her afar from the path of immortality; and how sadly tarnished all those beauties and felicities are, which promised, on that morning of her existence when God looked on her, and saw that all was very good—which promised so richly to bless and to adorn her; and how in the eye of the whole unfallen creation, she has renounced all this goodliness, and is fast departing away from them into guilt, and wretchedness, and shame. Oh! if there be any truth in this chapter, and any sweet or touching nature in the principle which runs throughout all its parables, let us cease to wonder, though they who surround the throne of love should be looking so intently towards us—or though, in the way by which they have singled us out, all the other orbs of space should, for one short season, on the scale of eternity, appear to be forgotten—or though, for every step of her recovery, and for every individual who is rendered back

again to the fold from which he was separated, another and another message of triumph should be made to circulate among the hosts of paradise—or though lost as we are, and sunk in depravity as we are, all the sympathies of heaven should now be awake on the enterprise of him who has travailed, in the greatness of his strength, to seek and to save us.

And here I cannot but remark how fine a harmony there is between the law of sympathetic nature in heaven, and the most touching exhibitions of it on the face of our world. When one of a numerous household droops under the power of disease, is not that the one to whom all the tenderness is turned, and who, in a manner, monopolizes the inquiries of his neighbourhood, and the care of his family? When the sighing of the midnight storm sends a dismal foreboding into the mother's heart, to whom of all her offspring, I would ask, are her thoughts and her anxieties then wandering? Is it not to her sailor boy whom her fancy has placed amid the rude and angry surges of the ocean? Does not this, the hour of his apprehended danger, concentrate upon him the whole force of her wakeful meditations? And does not he engross, for a season, her every sensibility, and her every prayer? We sometimes hear of shipwrecked passengers thrown upon a barbarous shore; and seized upon by its prowling inhabitants; and hurried away through the tracks of a dreary and unknown wilderness; and sold into captivity; and loaded with the fetters of irrecoverable bondage; and who, stripped of every other liberty but the liberty of thought, feel even this to be another ingredient of wretchedness, for what can they think of but home, and as all its kind and tender imagery comes upon their remembrance, how can they think of it but in the bitterness of despair? Oh tell me, when the fame of all this disaster reaches his family, who is the member of it to whom is

directed the full tide of its griefs and of its sympathies? Who is it that, for weeks and for months, usurps their every feeling, and calls out their largest sacrifices, and sets them to the busiest expedients for getting him back again? Who is it that makes them forgetful of themselves and of all around them; and tell me if you can assign a limit to the pains, and the exertions, and the surrenders which afflicted parents and weeping sisters would make to seek and to save him?

Now conceive, as we are warranted to do by the parables of this chapter, the principle of all these earthly exhibitions to be in full operation around the throne of God. Conceive the universe to be one secure and rejoicing family, and that this alienated world is the only strayed, or only captive member belonging to it; and we shall cease to wonder, that from the first period of the captivity of our species, down to the consummation of their history in time, there should be such a movement in heaven; or that angels should so often have sped their commissioned way on the errand of our recovery; or that the Son of God should have bowed himself down to the burden of our mysterious atonement; or that the Spirit of God should now, by the busy variety of his all-powerful influences, be carrying forward that dispensation of grace which is to make us meet for readmittance into the mansions of the celestial. Only think of love as the reigning principle there; of love, as sending forth its energies and aspirations to the quarter where its object is most in danger of being forever lost to it; of love, as called forth by this single circumstance to its uttermost exertion, and the most exquisite feeling of its tenderness; and then shall we come to a distinct and familiar explanation of this whole mystery: Nor shall we resist by our incredulity the gospel message any longer, though it tells us that throughout the whole of this world's history, long in our eyes, but

only a little month in the high periods of immortality, so much of the vigilance, and so much of the earnestness of heaven, should have been expended on the recovery of its guilty population.

There is another touching trait of nature, which goes finely to heighten this principle, and still more forcibly to demonstrate its application to our present argument. So long as the dying child of David was alive, he was kept on the stretch of anxiety and of suffering with regard to it. When it expired, he arose and comforted himself. This narrative of King David is in harmony with all that we experience of our own movements and our own sensibilities. It is the power of uncertainty which gives them so active and so interesting a play in our bosoms; and which heightens all our regards to a tenfold pitch of feeling and of exercise; and which fixes down our watchfulness upon our infant's dying bed; and which keeps us so painfully alive to every turn and to every symptom in the progress of its malady; and which draws out all our affections for it to a degree of intensity that is quite unutterable; and which urges us on to ply our every effort and our every expedient, till hope withdraw its lingering beam, or till death shut the eyes of our beloved in the slumber of its long and its last repose.

I know not who of you have your names written in the book of life—nor can I tell if this be known to the angels which are in heaven. While in the land of living men, you are under the power and application of a remedy, which, if taken as the gospel prescribes, will renovate the soul, and altogether prepare it for the bloom and the vigour of immortality. Wonder not then that with this principle of uncertainty in such full operation, ministers should feel for you; or angels should feel for you; or all the sensibilities of heaven should be awake upon the symptoms of your grace and reformation; or the eyes of those

who stand upon the high eminences of the celestial world, should be so earnestly fixed on the every footstep and new evolution of your moral history. Such a consideration as this should do something more than silence the infidel objection. It should give a practical effect to the calls of repentance. How will it go to aggravate the whole guilt of our impenitency, should we stand out against the power and the tenderness of these manifold applications—the voice of a beseeching God upon us—the word of salvation at our very door—the free offer of strength and of acceptance sounded in our hearing—the Spirit in readiness with his agency to meet our every desire and our every inquiry—angels beckoning us to their company—and the very first movements of our awakened conscience drawing upon us all their regards and all their earnestness!

DISCOURSE VI.

ON THE CONTEST FOR AN ASCENDENCY OVER MAN, AMONG THE HIGHER ORDERS OF INTELLIGENCE.

"*And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.*" COL. ii. 15.

THOUGH these Astronomical Discourses be now drawing to a close, it is not because I feel that much more might not be said on the subject of them, both in the way of argument and of illustration. The whole of the infidel difficulty proceeds upon the assumption, that the exclusive bearing of Christianity is upon the people of our earth; that this solitary planet is in no way implicated with the concerns of a wider dispensation; that the revelation we have of the dealings of God, in this district of his empire, does not suit and subordinate itself to a system of moral administration, as extended as in the whole of his monarchy. Or, in other words, because infidels have not access to the whole truth, will they refuse a part of it, however well attested or well accredited it may be; because a mantle of deep obscurity rests on the government of God, when taken in all its eternity and all its en-

tireness, will they shut their eyes against that allowance of light which has been made to pass downwards upon our world from time to time, through so many partial unfoldings; and till they are made to know the share which other planets have in these communications of mercy, will they turn them away from the actual message which has come to their own door, and will neither examine its credentials, nor be alarmed by its warnings, nor be won by the tenderness of its invitations.

On that day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, there will be found such a wilful duplicity and darkening of the mind in the whole of this proceeding, as shall bring down upon it the burden of a righteous condemnation. But, even now, does it lie open to the rebuke of philosophy, when the soundness and the consistency of her principles are brought faithfully to bear upon it. Were the character of modern science rightly understood, it would be seen, that the very thing which gave such strength and sureness to all her conclusions, was that humility of spirit which belonged to her. She promulgates all that is positively known; but she maintains the strictest silence and modesty about all that is unknown. She thankfully accepts of evidence wherever it can be found; nor does she spurn away from her the very humblest contribution of such doctrine as can be witnessed by human observation, or can be attested by human veracity. But with all this she can hold out most sternly against that power of eloquence and fancy, which often throws so bewitching a charm over the plausibilities of ingenious speculation. Truth is the alone idol of her reverence; and did she at all times keep by her attachments, nor throw them away when theology submitted to her cognizance its demonstrations and its claims, we should not despair of witnessing as great a revolution in those prevailing habitudes of thought which obtain throughout our

literary establishments, on the subject of Christianity, as that which has actually taken place in the philosophy of external nature. This is the first field on which have been successfully practised the experimental lessons of Bacon; and they who are conversant with these matters, know how great and how general a uniformity of doctrine now prevails in the sciences of astronomy, and mechanics, and chemistry, and almost all the other departments in the history and philosophy of matter. But this uniformity stands strikingly contrasted with the diversity of our moral systems, with the restless fluctuations both of language and of sentiment which are taking place in the philosophy of mind, with the palpable fact, that every new course of instruction upon this subject, has some new articles, or some new explanations to peculiarize it: and all this is to be attributed, not to the progress of the science, not to the growing, but to an alternating movement; not to its perpetual additions, but to its perpetual vibrations.

I mean not to assert the futility of moral science, or to deny her importance, or to insist on the utter hopelessness of her advancement. The Baconian method will not probably push forward her discoveries with such a rapidity, or to such an extent, as many of her sanguine disciples have anticipated. But if the spirit and the maxims of this philosophy were at all times proceeded upon, it would certainly check that rashness and variety of excogitation, in virtue of which it may almost be said, that every new course presents us with a new system, and that every new teacher has some singularity or other to characterize him. She may be able to make out an exact transcript of the phenomena of mind, and in so doing, she yields a most important contribution to the stock of human acquirements. But when she attempts to grope her darkling way through the counsels of the Deity, and the futu-

rities of his administration; when, without one passing acknowledgment to the embassy which professes to have come from Him, or to the facts and to the testimonies by which it has so illustriously been vindicated, she launches forth her own speculations on the character of God, and the destiny of man; when, though this be a subject on which neither the recollections of history, nor the ephemeral experience of any single life, can furnish one observation to enlighten her, she will nevertheless utter her own plausibilities, not merely with a contemptuous neglect of the Bible, but in direct opposition to it; then it is high time to remind her of the difference between the reverie of him who has not seen God, and the well-accredited declaration of Him who was in the beginning with God, and was God; and to tell her that this, so far from being the argument of an ignoble fanaticism, is in harmony with the very argument upon which the science of experiment has been reared, and by which it has been at length delivered from the influence of theory, and purified of all its vain and visionary splendours.

In my last Discourses, I have attempted to collect from the records of God's actual communication to the world, such traces of relationship between other orders of being and the great family of mankind, as serve to prove that Christianity is not so paltry and provincial a system as infidelity presumes it to be. And as I said before, I have not exhausted all that may legitimately be derived upon this subject from the informations of Scripture. I have adverted, it is true, to the knowledge of our moral history, which obtains throughout other provinces of the intelligent creation. I have asserted the universal importance which this may confer on the transactions even of one planet, in as much as it may spread an honourable display of the Godhead among all the mansions of infinity. I have attempted to expatiate on the argument,

that an event little in itself, may be so pregnant with character, as to furnish all the worshippers of heaven with a theme of praise for eternity. I have stated that nothing is of magnitude in their eyes, but that which serves to endear to them the Father of their spirits, or to shed a lustre over the glory of his incomprehensible attributes—and that thus, from the redemption even of our solitary species, there may go forth such an exhibition of the Deity, as shall bear the triumphs of his name to the very outskirts of the universe.

I have further adverted to another distinct scriptural intimation, that the state of fallen man was not only matter of knowledge to other orders of creation, but was also matter of deep regret and affectionate sympathy; that, agreeably to such laws of sympathy as are most familiar even to human observation, the very wretchedness of our condition was fitted to concentrate upon us the feelings, and the attentions, and the services, of the celestial—to single us out for a time to the gaze of their most earnest and unceasing contemplation—to draw forth all that was kind and all that was tender within them—and just in proportion to the need and to the helplessness of us miserable exiles from the family of God, to multiply upon us the regards, and call out in our behalf the fond and eager exertions of those who had never wandered away from Him. This appears from the Bible to be the style of that benevolence which glows and which circulates around the throne of heaven. It is the very benevolence which emanates from the throne itself, and the attentions of which have for so many thousand years signalized the inhabitants of our world. This may look a long period for so paltry a world. But how have infidels come to their conception that our world is so paltry? By looking abroad over the countless systems of immensity. But why then have they missed the conception, that the time of those

peculiar visitations, which they look upon as so disproportionate to the magnitude of this earth, is just as evanescent as the earth itself is insignificant? Why look they not abroad on the countless generations of eternity; and thus come back to the conclusion, that after all, the redemption of our species is but an ephemeral doing in the history of intelligent nature: that it leaves the Author of it room for all the accomplishments of a wise and equal administration; and not to mention, that even during the progress of it, it withdraws not a single thought or a single energy of his from other fields of creation, that there remains time enough to him for carrying round the visitations of as striking and as peculiar a tenderness, over the whole extent of his great and universal monarchy?

It might serve still further to incorporate the concerns of our planet with the general history of moral and intelligent beings, to state, not merely the knowledge which they take of us, and not merely the compassionate anxiety which they feel for us; but to state the importance derived to our world from its being the actual theatre of a keen and ambitious contest among the upper orders of creation. You know that how, for the possession of a very small and insulated territory, the mightiest empires of the world have put forth all their resources; and on some field of mustering competition have monarchs met, and embarked for victory, all the pride of a country's talent, and all the flower and strength of a country's population. The solitary island, around which so many fleets are hovering, and on the shores of which so many armed men are descending, as to an arena of hostility, may well wonder at its own unlooked for estimation. But other principles are animating the battle: and the glory of nations is at stake; and a much higher result is in the contemplation of each party, than the gain of so humble an acquirement as the primary object of the

war; and honour, dearer to many a bosom than existence, is now the interest on which so much blood and so much treasure is expended; and the stirring spirit of emulation has now got hold of the combatants; and thus, amid all the insignificancy, which attaches to the material origin of the contest, do both the eagerness and the extent of it, receive from the constitution of our nature, their most full and adequate explanation.

Now, if this be also the principle of higher natures; if, on the one hand, God be jealous of his honour, and on the other, there be proud and exalted spirits, who scowl defiance at him and at his monarchy;—if, on the side of heaven, there be an angelic host rallying around the standard of loyalty, who flee with alacrity at the bidding of the Almighty, who are devoted to his glory, and feel a rejoicing interest in the evolution of his counsels; and if, on the side of hell, there be a sullen front of resistance, a hate and malice inextinguishable, an unequalled daring of revenge to baffle the wisdom of the Eternal, and to arrest the hand, and to defeat the purposes of Omnipotence;—then let the material prize of victory be insignificant as it may, it is the victory in itself, which upholds the impulse of this keen and stimulated rivalry. If, by the sagacity of one infernal mind, a single planet has been seduced from its allegiance, and been brought under the ascendency of him, who is called in Scripture, "the god of this world," and if the errand on which our Redeemer came, was to destroy the works of the devil—then let this planet have all the littleness, which astronomy has assigned to it—call it what it is, one of the smaller islets which float on the ocean of vacancy; it has become the theatre of such a competition, as may have all the desires and all the energies of a divided universe embarked upon it. It involves in it other objects than the single recovery of our species. It decides higher

questions. It stands linked with the supremacy of God, and will at length demonstrate the way in which he inflicts chastisement and overthrow upon all his enemies. I know not if our rebellious world be the only strong-hold which satan is possessed of, or if it be but the single post of an extended warfare, that is now going on between the powers of light and of darkness. But be it the one or the other, the parties are in array, and the spirit of the contest is in full energy, and the honour of mighty combatants is at stake; and let us therefore cease to wonder that our humble residence has been made the theatre of so busy an operation, or that the ambition of loftier natures has here put forth all its desire and all its strenuousness.

This unfolds to us another of those high and extensive bearings, which the moral history of our globe may have on the system of God's universal administration. Were an enemy to touch the shore of this high-minded country, and to occupy so much as one of the humblest of its villages, and there to seduce the natives from their loyalty, and to sit down along with them in entrenched defiance to all the threats, and to all the preparations of an insulted empire—oh! how would the cry of wounded pride resound throughout all the ranks and varieties of our mighty population; and this very movement of indignancy would reach the king upon his throne; and circulate among those who stood in all the grandeur of chieftainship around him; and be heard to thrill in the eloquence of Parliament; and spread so resistless an appeal to a nation's honour, and a nation's patriotism, that the trumpet of war would summon to its call all the spirit and all the willing energies of our kingdom; and rather than sit down in patient endurance under the burning disgrace of such a violation, would the whole of its strength and resources be embarked upon the contest; and never, never would we let down our exertions and our sacrifices, till

either our deluded countrymen were reclaimed, or till the whole of this offence were by one righteous act of vengeance, swept away altogether from the face of the territory it deformed.

The Bible is always most full and most explanatory on those points of revelation in which men are personally interested. But it does at times offer a dim transparency, through which may be caught a partial view of such designs and of such enterprises as are now afloat among the upper orders of intelligence. It tells us of a mighty struggle that is now going on for a moral ascendency over the hearts of this world's population. It tells us that our race were seduced from their allegiance to God, by the plotting sagacity of one who stands pre-eminent against him, among the hosts of a very wide and extended rebellion. It tells us of the Captain of Salvation, who undertook to spoil him of this triumph, and throughout the whole of that magnificent train of prophecy which points to him, does it describe the work he had to do as a conflict, in which strength was to be put forth, and painful suffering to be endured, and fury to be poured upon enemies, and principalities to be dethroned, and all those toils, and dangers, and difficulties to be borne, which strewed the path of perseverance that was to carry him to victory.

But it is a contest of skill, as well as of strength and of influence. There is the earnest competition of angelic faculties embarked on this struggle for ascendency. And while in the Bible there is recorded, (faintly and partially, we admit,) the deep and insidious policy that is practised on the one side; we are also told, that on the plan of our world's restoration, there are lavished all the riches of an unsearchable wisdom upon the other. It would appear, that for the accomplishment of his purpose, the great enemy of God and of man plied his every calculation;

and brought all the devices of his deep and settled malignity to bear upon our species; and thought that could he involve us in sin, every attribute of the Divinity stood staked to the banishment of our race from beyond the limits of the empire of righteousness; and thus did he practise his invasions on the moral territory of the unfallen; and glorying in his success, did he fancy and feel that he had achieved a permanent separation between the God who sitteth in heaven, and one at least of the planetary mansions which he had reared.

The errand of the Saviour was to restore this sinful world, and have its people re-admitted within the circle of heaven's pure and righteous family. But in the government of heaven, as well as in the government of earth, there are certain principles which cannot be compromised; and certain maxims of administration which must never be departed from; and a certain character of majesty and of truth, on which the taint even of the slightest violation can never be permitted; and a certain authority which must be upheld by the immutability of all its sanctions, and the unerring fulfilment of all its wise and righteous proclamations. All this was in the mind of the archangel, and a gleam of malignant joy shot athwart him as he conceived his project for hemming our unfortunate species within the bound of an irrecoverable dilemma; and as surely as sin and holiness could not enter into fellowship, so surely did he think, that if man were seduced to disobedience, would the truth, and the justice, and the immutability of God, lay their insurmountable barriers on the path of his future acceptance.

It was only in that plan of recovery of which Jesus Christ was the author and the finisher, that the great adversary of our species met with a wisdom which over-matched him. It is true, that he had reared, in the guilt to which he seduced us, a mighty obstacle in the way of

this lofty undertaking. But when the grand expedient was announced, and the blood of that atonement, by which sinners are brought nigh, was willingly offered to be shed for us, and the eternal Son, to carry this mystery into accomplishment, assumed our nature—then was the prince of that mighty rebellion, in which the fate and the history of our world are so deeply implicated, in visible alarm for the safety of all his acquisitions:—nor can the record of this wondrous history carry forward its narrative, without furnishing some transient glimpses of a sublime and a superior warfare, in which, for the prize of a spiritual dominion over our species, we may dimly perceive the contest of loftiest talent, and all the designs of heaven in behalf of man, met at every point of their evolution, by the counterworkings of a rival strength and a rival sagacity.

We there read of a struggle which the Captain of our salvation had to sustain, when the lustre of the Godhead lay obscured, and the strength of its omnipotence was mysteriously weighed down under the infirmities of our nature—how satan singled him out, and dared him to the combat of the wilderness—how all his wiles and all his influences were resisted—how he left our Saviour in all the triumphs of unsubdued loyalty—how the progress of this mighty achievement is marked by the every character of a conflict—how many of the Gospel miracles were so many direct infringements on the power and empire of a great spiritual rebellion—how in one precious season of gladness among the few which brightened the dark career of our Saviour's humiliation, he rejoiced in spirit, and gave as the cause of it to his disciples, that "he saw satan fall like lightning from heaven"—how the momentary advantages that were gotten over him, are ascribed to the agency of this infernal being, who entered the heart of Judas, and tempted the disciple to betray his Master and his Friend. I know that I am treading on the confines

of mystery. I cannot tell what the battle that he fought. I cannot compute the terror or the strength of his enemies. I cannot say, for I have not been told, how it was that they stood in marshalled and hideous array against him: —nor can I measure how great the firm daring of his soul, when he tasted that cup in all its bitterness, which he prayed might pass away from him; when with the feeling that he was forsaken by his God, he trod the wine-press alone; when he entered singlehanded upon that dreary period of agony, and insult, and death, in which, from the garden to the cross, he had to bear the burden of a world's atonement. I cannot speak in my own language, but I can say in the language of the Bible, of the days and the nights of this great enterprise, that it was the season of the travail of his soul; that it was the hour and the power of darkness; that the work of our redemption was a work accompanied by the effort, and the violence, and the fury of a combat; by all the arduousness of a battle in its progress, and all the glories of a victory in its termination; and after he called out that it was finished, after he was loosed from the prison-house of the grave, after he had ascended up on high, he is said to have made captivity captive: and to have spoiled principalities and powers; and to have seen his pleasure upon his enemies; and to have made a show of them openly.

I will not affect a wisdom above that which is written, by fancying such details of this warfare as the Bible has not laid before me. But surely it is no more than being wise up to that which is written to assert that in achieving the redemption of our world, a warfare had to be accomplished; that upon this subject there was among the higher provinces of creation, the keen and the animated conflict of opposing interests; that the result of it involved something grander and more affecting, than even the fate of this world's population; that it decided a question of rival-

ship between the righteous and everlasting Monarch of universal being, and the prince of a great and widely extended rebellion, of which I neither know how vast is the magnitude, nor how important and diversified are the bearings; and thus do we gather from this consideration, another distinct argument, helping us to explain, why on the salvation of our solitary species so much attention appears to have been concentred, and so much energy appears to have been expended.

But it would appear from the records of inspiration, that the contest is not yet ended; that on the one hand the Spirit of God is employed in making for the truths of Christianity, a way into the human heart, with all the power of an effectual demonstration; that on the other there is a spirit now abroad, which worketh in the children of disobedience; that on the one hand, the Holy Ghost is calling men out of darkness into the marvellous light of the Gospel; and that on the other hand, he who is styled the god of this world, is blinding their hearts, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should enter into them; that they who are under the dominion of the one, are said to have overcome, because greater is he that is in them than he that is in the world; and that they who are under the dominion of the other, are said to be the children of the devil, and to be under his snare, and to be taken captive by him at his will. How these respective powers do operate, is one question. The fact of their operation, is another. We abstain from the former. We attach ourselves to the latter, and gather from it, that the prince of darkness still walketh abroad among us; that he is still working his insidious policy, if not with the vigorous inspiration of hope, at least with the frantic energies of despair; that while the overtures of reconciliation are made to circulate through the world, he is plying all his devices to deafen and to extinguish the impres-

sion of them; or, in other words, while a process of invitation and of argument has emanated from heaven, for reclaiming men to their loyalty—the process is resisted at all its points, by one who is putting forth his every expedient, and wielding a mysterious ascendency, to seduce and to enthral them.

To an infidel ear, all this carries the sound of something wild and visionary along with it. But though only known through the medium of revelation; after it is known, who can fail to recognize its harmony with the great lineaments of human experience? Who has not felt the workings of a rivalry within him, between the power of conscience and the power of temptation? Who does not remember those seasons of retirement, when the calculations of eternity had gotten a momentary command over the heart; and time, with all its interests and all its vexations, had dwindled into insignificancy before them? And who does not remember, how upon his actual engagement with the objects of time, they resumed a control, as great and as omnipotent, as if all the importance of eternity adhered to them—how they emitted from them such an impression upon his feelings, as to fix and to fascinate the whole man into a subserviency to their influence—how in spite of every lesson of their worthlessness, brought home to him at every turn by the rapidity of the seasons, and the vicissitudes of life, and the ever-moving progress of his own earthly career, and the visible ravages of death among his acquaintances around him, and the desolations of his family, and the constant breaking up of his system of friendships, and the affecting spectacle of all that lives and is in motion, withering and hastening to the grave;—oh! how comes it, that in the face of all this experience, the whole elevation of purpose, conceived in the hour of his better understanding, should be dissipated and forgotten? Whence the might, and whence the mystery of that spell,

which so binds and so infatuates us to the world? What prompts us so to embark the whole strength of our eagerness and of our desires in pursuit of interests which we know a few little years will bring to utter annihilation? Who is it that imparts to them all the charm and all the colour of an unfailing durability? Who is it that throws such an air of stability over these earthly tabernacles, as makes them look to the fascinated eye of man like resting-places for eternity? Who is it that so pictures out the objects of sense, and so magnifies the range of their future enjoyment, and so dazzles the fond and deceived imagination, that in looking onward through our earthly career, it appears like the vista, or the perspective of innumerable ages? He who is called the god of this world. He who can dress the idleness of its waking dreams in the garb of reality. He who can pour a seducing brilliancy over the panorama of its fleeting pleasures and its vain anticipations. He who can turn it into an instrument of deceitfulness; and make it wield such an absolute ascendency over all the affections, that man, become the poor slave of its idolatries, and its charms, puts the authority of conscience, and the warnings of the Word of God, and the offered instigations of the Spirit of God, and all the lessons of calculation, and all the wisdom even of his own sound and sober experience, away from him.

But this wondrous contest will come to a close. Some will return to their loyalty, and others will keep by their rebellion; and, in the day of the winding up of the drama of this world's history, there will be made manifest to the myriads of the various orders of creation, both the mercy and vindicated majesty of the Eternal. Oh! on that day how vain will this presumption of the Infidel astronomer appear, when the affairs of men come to be examined in the presence of an innumerable company; and beings of loftiest nature are seen to crowd around the

judgment-seat; and the Saviour shall appear in our sky, with a celestial retinue, who have come with him from afar to witness all his doings, and to take a deep and solemn interest in all his dispensations; and the destiny of our species, whom the Infidel would thus detach, in solitary insignificance, from the universe altogether, shall be found to merge and to mingle with higher destinies—the good to spend their eternity with angels—the bad to spend their eternity with angels—the former to be re-admitted into the universal family of God's obedient worshippers—the latter to share in the everlasting pain and ignominy of the defeated hosts of the rebellious—the people of this planet to be implicated, throughout the whole train of their never-ending history, with the higher ranks, and the more extended tribes of intelligence: And thus it is that the special administration we now live under, shall be seen to harmonize in its bearings, and to accord in its magnificence, with all that extent of nature and of her territories, which modern science has unfolded.

DISCOURSE VII.

ON THE SLENDER INFLUENCE OF MERE TASTE AND SENSIBILITY IN MATTERS OF RELIGION.

"*And, lo! thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one who hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not.*"—EZEKIEL xxxiii. 32.

You easily understand how a taste for music is one thing, and a real submission to the influence of religion is another;—how the ear may be regaled by the melody of sound, and the heart may utterly refuse the proper impression of the sense that is conveyed by it;—how the sons and daughters of the world may, with their every affection devoted to its perishable vanities, inhale all the delights of enthusiasm, as they sit in crowded assemblage around the deep and solemn oratorio;—aye, and whether it be the humility of penitential feeling, or the rapture of grateful acknowledgment, or the sublime of a contemplative piety, or the aspiration of pure and of holy purposes, which breathes throughout the words of the performance, and gives to it all the spirit and all the

expression by which it is pervaded; it is a very possible thing, that the moral, and the rational, and the active man, may have given no entrance into his bosom for any of these sentiments; and yet so overpowered may he be by the charm of the vocal conveyance through which they are addressed to him, that he may be made to feel with such an emotion, and to weep with such a tenderness, and to kindle with such a transport, and to glow with such an elevation, as may one and all carry upon them the semblance of sacredness.

But might not this semblance deceive him? Have you never heard any tell, and with complacency too, how powerfully his devotion was awakened by an act of attendance on the oratorio—how his heart, melted and subdued by the influence of harmony, did homage to all the religion of which it was the vehicle—how he was so moved and overborne, that he had to shed the tears of contrition, and to be agitated by the terrors of judgment, and to receive an awe upon his spirit of the greatness and the majesty of God—and that wrought up to the lofty pitch of eternity, he could look down upon the world, and by the glance of one commanding survey, pronounce upon the littleness and the vanity of all its concerns? Oh! it is very, very possible that all this might thrill upon the ears of the man, and circulate a succession of solemn and affecting images around his fancy—and yet that essential principle of his nature, upon which the practical influence of Christianity turns, might have met with no reaching and no subduing efficacy whatever to arouse it. He leaves the exhibition, as dead in trespasses and sins as he came to it. Conscience has not wakened upon him. Repentance has not turned him. Faith has not made any positive lodgement within him of her great and her constraining realities. He speeds him back to his business and to his family, and there he plays off the old man in all the

entireness of his uncrucified temper, and of his obstinate worldliness, and of all those earthly and unsanctified affections, which are found to cleave to him with as great tenacity as ever. He is really and experimentally the very same man as before—and all those sensibilities which seemed to bear upon them so much of the air and unction of heaven, are found to go into dissipation, and be forgotten with the loveliness of the song.

Amid all that illusion which such momentary visitations of seriousness and of sentiment throw around the character of man, let us never lose sight of the test, that "by their fruits ye shall know them." It is not coming up to this test, that you hear and are delighted. It is that you hear and do. This is the ground upon which the reality of your religion is discriminated now; and on the day of reckoning, this is the ground upon which your religion will be judged then; and that award is to be passed upon you, which will fix and perpetuate your destiny for ever. You have a taste for music. This no more implies the hold and the ascendency of religion over you, than that you have a taste for beautiful scenery, or a taste for painting, or even a taste for the sensualities of epicurism. But music may be made to express the glow and the movement of devotional feeling; and is it saying nothing to say that the heart of him who listens with a raptured ear, is through the whole time of the performance, in harmony with such a movement? Why, it is saying nothing to the purpose. Music may lift the inspiring note of patriotism; and the inspiration may be felt; and it may thrill over the recesses of the soul, to the mustering up of all its energies; and it may sustain to the last cadence of the song, the firm nerve and purpose of intrepidity; and all this may be realized upon him, who in the day of battle, and upon actual collision with the dangers of it, turns out to be a coward. And music may lull the

feelings into unison with piety; and stir up the inner man to lofty determinations; and so engage for a time his affections, that as if weaned from the dust, they promise an immediate entrance on some great and elevated career, which may carry him through his pilgrimage superior to all the sordid and grovelling enticements that abound in it. But he turns him to the world, and all this glow abandons him; and the words which he hath heard, he doeth them not; and in the hour of temptation he turns out to be a deserter from the law of allegiance; and the test I have now specified looks hard upon him, and discriminates him amid all the parading insignificance of his fine but fugitive emotions, to be the subject both of present guilt and of future vengeance.

The faithful application of this test would put to flight a host of other delusions. It may be carried round among all those phenomena of human character, where there is the exhibition of something associated with religion, but which is not religion itself. An exquisite relish for music is no test of the influence of Christianity. Neither are many other of the exquisite sensibilities of our nature. When a kind mother closes the eyes of her expiring babe, she is thrown into a flood of sensibility, and soothing to her heart are the sympathy and the prayers of an attending minister. When a gathering neighbourhood assemble to the funeral of an acquaintance, one pervading sense of regret and tenderness sits on the face of the company; and the deep silence, broken only by the solemn utterance of the man of God, carries a kind of pleasing religiousness along with it. The sacredness of the hallowed day, and the decencies of its observation, may engage the affections of him who loves to walk in the footsteps of his father; and every recurring Sabbath may bring to his bosom, the charm of its regularity and its quietness. Religion has its accompaniments; and in

these, there may be something to soothe, and to fascinate, even in the absence of the appropriate influences of religion. The deep and tender impression of a family-bereavement, is not religion. The love of established decencies, is not religion. The charm of all that sentimentalism which is associated with many of its solemn and affecting services, is not religion. They may form the distinct folds of its accustomed drapery; but they do not, any, or all of them put together, make up the substance of the thing itself. A mother's tenderness may flow most gracefully over the tomb of her departed little one; and she may talk the while of that heaven whither its spirit has ascended. The man whom death had widowed of his friend, may abandon himself to the movements of that grief, which for a time will claim an ascendency over him; and, among the multitude of his other reveries, may love to hear of the eternity, where sorrow and separation are alike unknown. He who has been trained, from his infant days, to remember the Sabbath, may love the holiness of its aspect; and associate himself with all its observances; and take a delighted share in the mechanism of its forms. But, let not these think, because the tastes and the sensibilities which engross them, may be blended with religion, that they indicate either its strength or its existence within them. I recur to the test. I press its imperious exactions upon you. I call for fruit, and demand the permanency of a religious influence on the habits and the history. Oh! how many who take a flattering unction to their souls, when they think of their amiable feelings, and their becoming observations, with whom this severe touch-stone would, like the head of Medusa, put to flight all their complacency. The afflictive dispensation is forgotten—and he on whom it was laid, is practically as indifferent to God and to eternity as before. The Sabbath services come to a close; and they are followed

by the same routine of week-day worldliness as before. In neither the one case nor the other, do we see more of the radical influence of Christianity, than in the sublime and melting influence of sacred music upon the soul; and all this tide of emotion is found to die away from the bosom, like the pathos or like the loveliness of a song.

The instances may be multiplied without number. A man may have a taste for eloquence, and eloquence the most touching or sublime may lift her pleading voice on the side of religion. A man may love to have his understanding stimulated by the ingenuities, or the resistless urgencies of an argument; and argument the most profound and the most overbearing, may put forth all the might of a constraining vehemence in behalf of religion. A man may feel the rejoicings of a conscious elevation, when some ideal scene of magnificence is laid before him; and where are these scenes so readily to be met with, as when led to expatiate in thought over the track of eternity, or to survey the wonders of creation, or to look to the magnitude of those great and universal interests which lie within the compass of religion. A man may have his attention riveted and regaled by that power of imitative description, which brings all the recollections of his own experience before him; which presents him with a faithful analysis of his own heart; which embodies in language such intimacies of observation and of feeling, as have often passed before his eyes, or played within his bosom, but had never been so truly or so ably pictured to the view of his remembrance. Now, all this may be done in the work of pressing the duties of religion; in the work of instancing the applications of religion; in the work of pointing those allusions to life and to manners, which manifest the truth to the conscience, and plant such a conviction of sin, as forms the very basis of a sinner's religion. Now, in all these cases, I see other principles

brought into action, and which may be in a state of most lively and vigorous movement, and be yet in a state of entire separation from the principle of religion. I will make bold to say, on the strength of these illustrations, that as much delight may emanate from the pulpit, on an arrested audience beneath it, as ever emanated from the boards of a theatre—aye, and with as total a disjunction of mind too, in the one case as in the other, from the essence or the habit of religion. I recur to the test. I make my appeal to experience; and I put it to you all, whether your finding upon the subject do not agree with my saying about it, that a man may weep, and admire, and have many of his faculties put upon the stretch of their most intense gratification—his judgment established, and his fancy enlivened, and his feelings overpowered, and his hearing charmed, as by the accents of heavenly persuasion, and all within him feasted by the rich and varied luxuries of an intellectual banquet!—Oh! it is cruel to frown unmannerly in the midst of so much satisfaction. But I must not forget that truth has her authority, as well as her sternness; and she forces me to affirm, that after all this has been felt and gone through, there might not be one principle which lies at the turning point of conversion, that has experienced a single movement—not one of its purposes be conceived—not one of its doings be accomplished—not one step of that repentance, which, if we have not, we perish, so much as entered upon—not one announcement of that faith, by which we are saved, admitted into a real and actual possession by the inner man. He has had his hour's entertainment, and willingly does he award this homage to the performer, that he hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument—but, in another hour, it fleets away from his remembrance, and goes all to nothing, like the loveliness of a song.

Now, in bringing these Astronomical Discourses to a

close, I feel it my duty to advert to this exhibition of character in man. The sublime and interesting topic which has engaged us, however feebly it may have been handled; however inadequately it may have been put in all its worth, and in all its magnitude before you; however short the representation of the speaker, or the conception of the hearers may have been of that richness, and that greatness, and that loftiness, which belong to it; possesses in itself a charm to fix the attention, and to regale the imagination, and to subdue the whole man into a delighted reverence; and, in a word, to beget such a solemnity of thought, and of emotion, as may occupy and enlarge the soul for hours together, as may waft it away from the grossness of ordinary life, and raise it to a kind of elevated calm above all its vulgarities and all its vexations.

Now, tell me whether the whole of this effect upon the feelings, may not be formed without the presence of religion. Tell me whether there might not be such a constitution of mind, that it may both want altogether that principle in virtue of which the doctrines of Christianity are admitted into the belief, and the duties of Christianity are admitted into a government over the practice—and yet, at the very same time, it may have the faculty of looking abroad over some scene of magnificence, and of being wrought up to ecstacy with the sense of all those glories among which it is expatiating. I want you to see clearly the distinction between these two attributes of the human character. They are, in truth, as different the one from the other, as a taste for the grand and the graceful of scenery differs from the appetite of hunger; and the one may both exist and have a most intense operation within the bosom of that very individual, who entirely disowns, and is entirely disgusted with the other. What! must a man be converted, ere from the most elevated peak

of some Alpine wilderness, he bocomes capable of feeling the force and the majesty of those great lineaments which the hand of nature has thrown around him, in the varied forms of precipice, and mountain, and the wave of mighty forests, and the rush of sounding waterfalls, and distant glimpses of human territory, and pinnacles of everlasting snow, and the sweep of that circling horizon, which folds in its ample embrace the whole of this noble amphitheatre? Tell me whether, without the aid of Christianity, or without a particle of reverence for the only name given under heaven whereby men can be saved, a man may not kindle at such a perspective as this, into all the raptures, and into all the movements of a poetic elevation; and be able to render into the language of poetry, the whole of that sublime and beauteous imagery which adorns it: aye, and as if he were treading on the confines of a sanctuary which he has not entered, may he not mix up with the power and the enchantment of his description, such allusions to the presiding genius of the scene; or to the still but animating spirit of the solitude; or to the speaking silence of some mysterious character which reigns throughout the landscape; or, in fine, to that eternal Spirit, who sits behind the elements he has formed, and combines them into all the varieties of a wide and a wondrous creation; might not all this be said and sung with an emphasis so moving, as to spread the colouring of piety over the pages of him who performs thus well upon his instrument; and yet, the performer himself have a conscience unmoved by a single warning of God's actual communication, and the judgment unconvinced, and the fears unawakened, and the life unreformed by it?

Now what is true of a scene on earth, is also true of that wider and more elevated scene which stretches over the immensity around it, into a dark and a distant unknown. Who does not feel an aggrandisement of thought and of faculty, when he looks abroad over the amplitudes

of creation—when placed on a telescopic eminence, his aided eye can find a pathway to innumerable worlds—when that wondrous field, over which there had hung for many ages the mantle of so deep an obscurity, is laid open to him, and instead of a dreary and unpeopled solitude, he can see over the whole face of it such an extended garniture of rich and goodly habitations! Even the Atheist, who tells us that the universe is self-existent and indestructible—even he, who instead of seeing the traces of a manifold wisdom in its manifold varieties, sees nothing in them all but the exquisite structures and the lofty dimensions of materialism—even he, who would despoil creation of its God, cannot look upon its golden suns, and their accompanying systems, without the solemn impression of a magnificence that fixes and overpowers him. Now, conceive such a belief of God as you all profess, to dawn upon his understanding. Let him become as one of yourselves—and so be put into the condition of rising from the sublime of matter to the sublime of mind. Let him now learn to subordinate the whole of this mechanism to the design and authority of a great presiding intelligence: and re-assembling all the members of the universe, however distant, into one family, let him mingle with his former conceptions of the grandeur which belonged to it, the conception of that eternal Spirit who sits enthroned on the immensity of his own wonders, and embraces all that he has made, within the ample scope of one great administration. Then will the images and the impressions of sublimity come in upon him from a new quarter. Then will another avenue be opened, through which a sense of grandeur may find its way into his soul, and have a mightier influence than ever to fill, and to elevate, and to expand it. Then will be established a new and a noble association, by the aid of which all that he formerly looked upon as fair, becomes more lovely; and

all that he formerly looked upon as great, becomes more magnificent. But will you believe me, that even with this accession to his mind of ideas gathered from the contemplation of the Divinity; even with that pleasurable glow which steals over his imagination, when he now thinks him of the majesty of God; even with as much of what you would call piety, as I fear is enough to soothe and to satisfy many of yourselves, and which stirs and kindles within you when you hear the goings forth of the Supreme set before you in the terms of a lofty representation; even with all this, I say there may be as wide a distance from the habit and the character of godliness, as if God was still atheistically disowned by him. Take the conduct of his life and the currency of his affections; and you may see as little upon them of the stamp of loyality to God, or of reverence for any one of his authenticated proclamations, as you may see in him who offers his poetic incense to the genii, or weeps enraptured over the visions of a beauteous mythology. The sublime of Deity has wrought up his soul to a pitch of conscious and pleasing elevation—and yet this no more argues the will of Deity to have a practical authority over him, than does that tone of elevation which is caught by looking at the sublime of a naked materialism. The one and the other have their little hour of ascendency over him; and when he turns him to the rude and ordinary world, both vanish alike from his sensibilities, as does the loveliness of a song.

To kindle and be elevated by a sense of the majesty of God, is one thing. It is totally another thing to feel a movement of obedience to the will of God, under the impression of his rightful authority over all the creatures whom he has formed. A man may have an imagination all alive to the former; while the latter never prompts him to one act of obedience; never leads him to compare

his life with the requirements of the Lawgiver; never carries him from such a scrutiny as this, to the conviction of sin; never whispers such an accusation to the ear of his conscience, as causes him to mourn, and to be in heaviness for the guilt of his hourly and habitual rebellion; never shuts him up to the conclusion of the need of a Saviour; never humbles him to acquiescence in the doctrine of that revelation, which comes to his door with such a host of evidence, as even his own philosophy cannot bid away; never extorts a single believing prayer in the name of Christ, or points a single look, either of trust or of reverence, to his atonement; never stirs any effective movement of conversion; never sends an aspiring energy into his bosom after the aids of that Spirit, who alone can waken him out of his lethargies, and by the anointing which remaineth, can rivet and substantiate in his practice, those goodly emotions which have hitherto plied him with the deceitfulness of their momentary visits, and then capriciously abandoned him.

The mere majesty of God's power and greatness, when offered to your notice, lays hold of one of the faculties within you. The holiness of God, with his righteous claim of legislation, lays hold of another of these faculties. The difference between them is so great, that the one may be engrossed and interested to the full, while the other remains untouched, and in a state of entire dormancy. Now, it is no matter what it be that ministers delight to the former of these two faculties: If the latter be not arrested and put on its proper exercise, you are making no approximation whatever to the right habit and character of religion. There are a thousand ways in which we may contrive to regale your taste for that which is beauteous and majestic. It may find its gratification in the loveliness of a vale, or in the freer and bolder outlines of an upland situation, or in the terrors of a storm, or in

the sublime contemplations of astronomy, or in the magnificent idea of a God who sends forth the wakefulness of his omniscient eye, and the vigour of his upholding hand, throughout all the realms of nature and of providence. The mere taste of the human mind may get its ample enjoyment in each and in all of these objects, or in a vivid representation of them; nor does it make any material difference, whether this representation be addressed to you from the stanzas of a poem, or from the recitations of a theatre, or finally from the discourses and the demonstrations of a pulpit. And thus it is, that still on the impulse of the one principle only, people may come in gathering multitudes to the house of God; and share with eagerness in all the glow and bustle of a crowded attendance; and have their every eye directed to the speaker; and feel a responding movement in their bosom to his many appeals and his many arguments; and carry a solemn and overpowering impression of all the services away with them; and yet throughout the whole of this seemly exhibition, not one effectual knock may have been given at the door of conscience. The other principle may be as profoundly asleep, as if hushed into the insensibility of death. There is a spirit of deep slumber, it would appear, which the music of no description, even though attuned to a theme so lofty as the greatness and majesty of the Godhead, can ever charm away. Oh! it may have been a piece of parading insignificance altogether—the minister playing on his favourite instrument, and the people dissipating away their time on the charm and idle luxury of a theatrical emotion.

The religion of taste, is one thing. The religion of conscience, is another. I recur to the test. What is the plain and practical doing which ought to issue from the whole of our argument? If one lesson come more clearly or more authoritatively out of it than another, it is the

supremacy of the Bible. If fitted to impress one movement rather than another, it is that movement of docility, in virtue of which, man, with the feeling that he has all to learn, places himself in the attitude of a little child, before the book of the unsearchable God, who has designed to break his silence, and to transmit, even to our age of the world, a faithful record of his own communication. What progress then are you making in this movement? Are you, or are you not, like new-born babes, desiring the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby? How are you coming on in the work of casting down your lofty imaginations? With the modesty of true science, which is here at one with the humblest and most penitentiary feeling which Christianity can awaken, are you bending an eye of earnestness on the Bible, and appropriating its informations, and moulding your every conviction to its doctrines and its testimonies? How long, I beseech you, has this been your habitual exercise? By this time do you feel the darkness and the insufficiency of nature? Have you found your way to the need of an atonement? Have you learned the might and the efficacy which are given to the principle of faith? Have you longed with all your energies to realize it? Have you broken loose from the obvious misdoings of your former history? Are you convinced of your total deficiency from the spiritual obedience of the affections? Have you read of the Holy Ghost, by whom, renewed in the whole desire and character of your mind, you are led to run with alacrity in the way of the commandments? Have you turned to its practical use, the important truth, that he is given to the believing prayers of all, who really want to be relieved from the power both of secret and of visible iniquity? I demand something more than the homage you have rendered to the pleasantness of the voice that has been sounding in your hearing. What I have now to urge upon you, is

the bidding of the voice, to read, and to reform and to pray, and, in a word, to make your consistent step from the elevations of philosophy, to all those exercises, whether of doing or of believing, which mark the conduct of the earnest, and the devoted, and the subdued, and the aspiring Christian.

This brings under our view a most deeply interesting exhibition of human nature, which may often be witnessed among the cultivated orders of society. When a teacher of Christianity addresses himself to that principle of justice within us, in virtue of which we feel the authority of God to be a prerogative which righteously belongs to him, he is then speaking the appropriate language of religion, and is advancing its naked and appropriate claim over the obedience of mankind. He is then urging that pertinent and powerful consideration, upon which alone he can never hope to obtain the ascendency of a practical influence over the purposes and the conduct of human beings. It is only by insisting on the moral claim of God to a right of government over his creatures, that he can carry their loyal subordination to the will of God. Let him keep by this single argument, and urge it upon the conscience, and then, without any of the other accompaniments of what is called christian oratory, he may bring convincingly home upon his hearers all the varieties of christian doctrine. He may establish within their minds the dominion of all that is essential in the faith of the New Testament. He may, by carrying out this principle of God's authority into all its applications, convince them of sin. He may lead them to compare the loftiness and spirituality of his law, with the habitual obstinacy of their own worldly affections. He may awaken them to the need of a Saviour. He may urge them to a faithful and submissive perusal of God's own communication. He may thence press upon them the truth and the immutability of their Sovereign. He may work in their hearts an impression of this emphatic

saying, that God is not to be mocked—that his law must be upheld in all the significancy of its proclamations—and that either its severities must be discharged upon the guilty, or in some other way an adequate provision be found for its outraged dignity, and its violated sanctions. Thus may he lead them to flee for refuge to the blood of the atonement. And he may further urge upon his hearers, how, such is the enormity of sin, that it is not enough to have found an expiation for it; how its power and its existence must be eradicated from the hearts of all, who are to spend their eternity in the mansions of the celestial; how, for this purpose, an expedient is made known to us in the New Testament; how a process must be described upon earth, to which there is given the appropriate name of sanctification; how, at the very commencement of every true course of discipleship, this process is entered upon with a purpose in the mind of forsaking all; how nothing short of a single devotedness to the will of God, will ever carry us forward through the successive stages of this holy and elevated career; how, to help the infirmities of our nature, the Spirit is ever in readiness to be given to those who ask it; and that thus the life of every Christian becomes a life of entire dedication to Him who died for us—a life of prayer, and vigilance, and close dependance on the grace of God; and, as the infallible result of the plain but powerful and peculiar teaching of the Bible, a life of vigorous unwearied activity in the doing of all the commandments.

Now, this I would call the essential business of Christianity. This is the truth as it is in Jesus, in its naked and unassociated simplicity. In the work of urging it, nothing more might have been done, than to present certain views, which may come with as great clearness, and freshness, and take as full possession of the mind of a peasant, as of the mind of a philosopher. There is a sense of God,

and of the rightful allegiance that is due to him. There are plain and practical appeals to the conscience. There is a comparison of the state of the heart, with the requirements of a law which proposes to take the heart under its obedience. There is the inward discernment of its coldness about God; of its unconcern about the matters of duty and of eternity; of its devotion to the forbidden objects of sense; of its constant tendency to nourish within its own receptacles, the very element and principle of rebellion, and in virtue of this, to send forth the stream of an hourly and accumulating disobedience over those doings of the outer man, which make up his visible history in the world. There is such an earnest and overpowering impression of all this, as will fix a man down to the single object of deliverance; as will make him awake only to those realities which have a significant and substantial bearing on the case that engrosses him; as will teach him to nauseate all the impertinences of tasteful and ambitious description; as will attach him to the truth in its simplicity; as will fasten his every regard upon the Bible, where, if he persevere in the work of honest inquiry, he will soon be made to perceive the accordancy between its statements, and all those movements of fear, or guilt, or deeply-felt necessity, or conscious darkness, stupidity, and unconcern about the matters of salvation, which pass within his own bosom; in a word, as will endear him to that plainness of speech, by which his own experience is set evidently before him, and that plain phraseology of scripture, which is best fitted to bring home to him the doctrine of redemption, in all the truth and in all the preciousness of its applications.

Now, the whole of this work may be going on, and that too in the wisest and most effectual manner, without so much as one particle of incense being offered to any of the subordinate principles of the human constitution.

There may be no fascinations of style. There may be no magnificence of description. There may be no poignancy of acute and irresistible argument. There may be a riveted attention on the part of those whom the Spirit of God hath awakened to seriousness about the plain and affecting realities of conversion. Their conscience may be stricken, and their appetite be excited for an actual settlement of mind on those points about which they feel restless and unconfirmed. Such as these are vastly too much engrossed with the exigencies of their condition, to be repelled by the homeliness of unadorned truth. And thus it is, that while the loveliness of the song has done so little in helping on the influences of the gospel, our men of simplicity and prayer have done so much for it. With a deep and earnest impression of the truth themselves, they have made manifest that truth to the consciences of others. Missionaries have gone forth with no other preparation than the simple Word of the Testimony —and thousands have owned its power, by being both the hearers of the word and the doers of it also. They have given us the experiment in a state of unmingled simplicity; and we learn, from the success of their noble example, that without any one human expedient to charm the ear, the heart may, by the naked instrumentality of the Word of God, urged with plainness on those who feel its deceit and its worthlessness, be charmed to an entire acquiescence in the revealed way of God, and have impressed upon it the genuine stamp and character of godliness.

Could the sense of what is due to God, be effectually stirred up within the human bosom, it would lead to a practical carrying of all the lessons of Christianity. Now, to awaken this moral sense, there are certain simple relations between the creature and the Creator, which must be clearly apprehended, and manifested with power unto the conscience. We believe, that however much philos-

ophers may talk about the comparative ease of forming those conceptions which are simple, they will, if in good earnest after a right footing with God, soon discover in their own minds, all that darkness and incapacity about spiritual things, which are so broadly announced to us in the New Testament. And, oh! it is a deeply interesting spectacle, to behold a man, who can take a masterly and commanding survey over the field of some human speculation, who can clear his discriminated way through all the turns and ingenuities of some human argument, who by the march of a mighty and resistless demonstration, can scale with assured footstep the sublimities of science, and from his firm stand on the eminence he has won, can descry some wondrous range of natural or intellectual truth spread out in subordination before him:—and yet this very man may, in reference to the moral and authoritative claims of the Godhead, be in a state of utter apathy and blindness! All his attempts, either at the spiritual discernment, or the practical impression of this doctrine, may be arrested and baffled by the weight of some great inexplicable impotency. A man of homely talents, and still homlier education, may see what he cannot see, and feel what he cannot feel; and wise and prudent as he is, there may lie the barrier of an obstinate and impenetrable concealment, between his accomplished mind, and those things which are revealed unto babes.

But while his mind is thus utterly devoid of what may be called the main or elemental principle of theology, he may have a far quicker apprehension, and have his taste and his feelings much more powerfully interested, than the simple Christian who is beside him, by what may be called the circumstantials of theology. He can throw a wider and more rapid glance over the magnitudes of creation. He can be more delicately alive to the beauties and the sublimities which abound in it.

He can, when the idea of a presiding God is suggested to him, have a more kindling sense of his natural majesty, and be able, both in imagination and in words, to surround the throne of the Divinity by the blazonry of more great, and splendid, and elevating images. And yet, with all those powers of conception which he does possess, he may not possess that on which practical Christianity hinges. The moral relation between him and God, may neither be effectively perceived, nor faithfully proceeded on. Conscience may be in a state of the most entire dormancy, and the man be regaling himself with the magnificence of God, while he neither loves God, nor believes God, nor obeys God.

And here I cannot but remark, how much effect and simplicity go together in the annals of Moravianism. The men of this truly interesting denomination, address themselves exclusively to that principle of our nature, on which the proper influence of Christianity turns. Or, in other words, they take up the subject of the gospel message, that message devised by him who knew what was in man, and who, therefore, knew how to make the right and the suitable application to man.—They urge the plain word of the Testimony; and they pray for a blessing from on high; and that thick impalpable veil, by which the god of this world blinds the hearts of men who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should enter into them—that veil, which no power of philosophy can draw aside, gives way to the demonstration of the Spirit; and thus it is, that a clear perception of scriptural truth, and all the freshness and permanency of its moral influences, are to be met with among men who have just emerged from the rudest and the grossest barbarity.—Oh! when one looks at the number and the greatness of their achievements; when he thinks of the change they have made on materials so coarse and so un-

promising; when he eyes the villages they have formed; and around the whole of that engaging perspective by which they have chequered and relieved the grim solitude of the desert, he witnesses the love, and listens to the piety of reclaimed savages;—who would not long to be in possession of the charm by which they have wrought this wondrous transformation—who would not willingly exchange for it all the parade of human eloquence, and all the confidence of human argument—and for the wisdom of winning souls, who is there that would not rejoice to throw the loveliness of the song, and all the insignificancy of its passing fascinations, away from him?

And yet it is right that every cavil against Christianity should be met, and every argument for it be exhibited, and all the graces and sublimities of its doctrine be held out to their merited admiration. And if it be true, as it certainly is, that throughout the whole of this process, a man may be carried rejoicingly along from the mere indulgence of his taste, and the mere play and exercise of his understanding; while conscience is untouched, and the supremacy of moral claims upon the heart and the conduct is practically disowned by him—it is further right that this should be adverted to; and that such a melancholy unhingement in the constitution of man should be fully laid open; and that he should be driven out of the seductive complacency which he is so apt to cherish, merely because he delights in the loveliness of the song; and that he should be urged with the imperiousness of a demand which still remains unsatisfied, to turn him from the corrupt indifference of nature, and to become personally a religious man; and that he should be assured how all the gratification he felt in listening to the word which respected the kingdom of God, will be of no avail, unless that kingdom come to himself in power—that it will only go to heighten the perversity of his character—that it will

not extenuate his real and practical ungodliness, but will serve most fearfully to aggravate the condemnation of it.

With a religion so argumentable as ours, it may be easy to gather out of it a feast for the human understanding. With a religion so magnificent as ours, it may be easy to gather out of it a feast for the human imagination. But with a religion so humbling, and so strict, and so spiritual, it is not easy to mortify the pride; or to quell the strong enmity of nature; or to arrest the currency of the affections; or to turn the constitutional habits; or to pour a new complexion over the moral history; or to stem the domineering influence of things seen and things sensible; or to invest faith with a practical supremacy; or to give its objects such a vivacity of influence as shall overpower the near and the hourly impressions, that are ever emanating upon man from a seducing world. It is here that man feels himself treading upon the limit of his helplessness. It is here that he sees where the strength of nature ends; and the power of grace must either be put forth, or leave him to grope his darkling way, without one inch of progress towards the life and the substance of Christianity. It is here that a barrier rises on the contemplation of the inquirer—the barrier of separation between the carnal and the spiritual, and on which he may idly waste the every energy which belongs to him, in the enterprise of surmounting it. It is here, that after having walked the round of nature's acquisitions, and lavished upon the truth of all his ingenuities, and surveyed it in its every palpable character of grace and majesty; he will still feel himself on a level with the simplest and most untutored of the species. He needs the power of a living manifestation. He needs the anointing which remaineth. He needs that which fixes and perpetuates a stable revolution upon the character, and in virtue of which he may be advanced from the state of one who hears, and is de-

lighted, to the state of one who hears, and is a doer. Oh! how strikingly is the experience even of vigorous and accomplished nature at one on this point with the announcements of revelation, that to work this change, there must be the putting forth of a peculiar agency; and that it is an agency, which, withheld from the exercise of loftiest talent, is often brought down on an impressed audience, through the humblest of all instrumentality, with the demonstration of the Spirit and with power.

Think it not enough, that you carry in your bosom an expanding sense of the magnificence of creation. But pray for a subduing sense of the authority of the Creator. Think it not enough, that with the justness of a philosophical discernment, you have traced that boundary which hems in all the possibilities of human attainment, and have found that all beyond it is a dark and fathomless unknown. But let this modesty of science be carried, as in consistency it ought, to the question of revelation, and let all the antipathies of nature be schooled to acquiescence in the authentic testimonies of the Bible. Think it not enough that you have looked with sensibility and wonder at the representation of God throned in immensity, yet combining with the vastness of his entire superintendence, a most thorough inspection into all the minute and countless diversities of existence. Think of your own heart as one of these diversities; and that he ponders all its tendencies; and has an eye upon all its movements; and marks all its waywardness; and, God of judgment as he is, records its every secret, and its every sin, in the book of his remembrance. Think it not enough, that you have been led to associate a grandeur with the salvation of the New Testament, when made to understand that it draws upon it the regards of an arrested universe. How is it arresting your own mind? What has been the earnestness of your personal regards towards it? And tell

me, if all its faith, and all its repentance, and all its holiness are not disowned by you? Think it not enough, that you have felt a sentimental charm when angels were pictured to your fancy as beckoning you to their mansions, and anxiously looking to the every symptom of your grace and reformation. Oh! be constrained by the power of all this tenderness, and yield yourselves up in a practical obedience to the call of the Lord God merciful and gracious. Think it not enough that you have shared for a moment in the deep and busy interest of that arduous conflict which is now going on for a moral ascendency over the species. Remember that the conflict is for each of you individually; and let this alarm you into a watchfulness against the power of every temptation, and a cleaving dependance upon him through whom alone you will be more than conquerors. Above all, forget not, that while you only hear and are delighted, you are still under nature's powerlessness, and nature's condemnation—and that the foundation is not laid, the mighty and essential change is not accomplished, the transition from death unto life is not undergone, the saving faith is not formed, nor the passage taken from darkness to the marvellous light of the gospel, till you are both hearers of the word and doers also. "For if any be a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was."

APPENDIX.

THE writer of these Discourses has drawn up the following compilation of passages from Scripture, as serving to illustrate or to confirm the leading arguments which have been employed in each separate division of his subject.

DISCOURSE I.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. Gen. i. 1.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. Gen. ii. 1.

Behold the heaven, and the heaven of heavens, is the Lord's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is. Deut. x. 14.

There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. Deut. xxxiii. 26.

And Hezekiah prayed before the Lord, and said, O Lord God of Israel, which dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth. 2 Kings xix. 15.

For all the gods of the people are Idols; but the Lord made the heavens. 1 Chronicles xvi. 26.

Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all things that are therein, the seas and all that is therein; and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee. Nehemiah ix. 6.

Which alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea; which maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south. Job ix. 8, 9.

He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing. Job xxvi. 7.

By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens. Job xxvi. 13.

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handy-work. Psalm xix. 1.

By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. Psalm xxxiii. 6.

Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands. Psalm cii. 25.

Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment; who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain. Psalm civ. 2.

He appointed the moon for seasons; the sun knoweth his going down. Psalm civ. 19.

You are blessed of the Lord which made heaven and earth. The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's; but the earth hath he given to the children of men. Psalm cxv. 15, 16.

My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. Psalm cxxi. 2.

Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. Psalm cxxiv. 8.

The Lord that made heaven and earth, bless thee out of Zion. Psalm cxxxiv. 3.

Which made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that therein is. Ps. cxlvi. 6.

The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens. Prov. iii. 19.

Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in a scale, and the hills in a balance. Isa. xl. 12.

It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heaven as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in. Isa. xl. 22.

Thus saith God the Lord, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein. Isa. xlii. 5.

Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself. Isa. xliv. 24.

I have made the earth, and created man upon it; I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded. Isa. xlv. 12.

For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens, God himself that formed the earth and made it, he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited. Isa. xlv. 18.

Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens; when I call unto them, they stand up together. Isa. xlviii. 13.

He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion. Jer. x. 12.

Ah Lord God! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy

great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee. Jer. xxxii. 17.

He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heaven by his understanding. Jer. li. 15.

It is he that buildeth his stories in the heaven, and hath founded his troop in the earth; he that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth, The Lord is his name. Amos ix. 6.

We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you, that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein. Acts xiv. 15.

Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds. Heb. i. 2.

Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thine hands. Heb. i. 10.

Through faith, we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God. Heb. xi. 3.

DISCOURSE II.

The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law. Deut. xxix. 29.

I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause; Which doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number. Job v. 8, 9.

Which doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number. Job ix. 10.

Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? Job xi. 7.

Hast thou heard the secret of God? and dost thou restrain wisdom to thyself? Job xv. 8.

Lo, these are parts of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand? Job xxvi. 14.

Behold, God is great, and we know him not; neither can the number of his years be searched out. Job xxxvi. 26.

God thundereth marvellously with his voice; great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend. Job xxxvii. 5.

Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out; he is excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of justice. Job xxxvii. 23.

Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known. Psalm lxxvii. 19.

Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable. Psalm cxlv. 3.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. Isa. lv. 8, 9.

Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Matth. xviii. 3.

Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God, as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein. Luke xviii. 17.

O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor? Rom. xi. 33, 34.

Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. 1 Cor. iii. 18.

For if a man thinketh himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. Gal. vi. 3.

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. Col. ii. 8.

O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called. 1 Tim. vi. 20.

DISCOURSE III.

But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold the heaven, and the heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded? Yet have thou respect unto the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O Lord my God, to hearken unto the cry and to the prayer which thy servant prayeth before thee to-day. That thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day, even towards the place of which thou hast said, My name shall be there; that thou mayest hearken unto the prayer which thy servant shall make towards this place. 1 Kings viii. 27, 28, 29.

For he looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven. Job xxviii. 24.

For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings. Job xxxiv. 21.

Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly. Psalm cxxxviii. 6.

O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising: thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compasseth my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord! thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence? Psalm cxxxix. 1—7.

How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake I am still with the.—Psalm cxxxix. 17, 18.

The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. Prov. xv. 3.

Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord: do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord. Jer. xxiii. 24.

Behold the fouls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Matt. vi. 26, 28, 29, 30.

But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Matth. x. 30.

Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. Heb. iv. 13.

DISCOURSE IV.

And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. Gen. xxviii. 12.

For a thousand years in thy sight, are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. Psalm xc. 4.

Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner; but my salvation shall be forever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished. Isa. li. 6.

For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. Matth. xvi. 27.

When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. Matth. xxv. 31.

Also, I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God. But he that denieth me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God. Luke xii. 8, 9.

And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. John i. 51.

We are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men. 1 Cor. iv. 9.

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which

is above every name. That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth ; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Phil. ii. 9, 10, 11.

When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels. 2 Thess. i. 7.

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness ; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. 1 Tim. iii. 16.

I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things. 1 Tim. v. 21.

And again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. Heb. i. 6.

But ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the first born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant. Hebrews xii. 22, 23, 24.

But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness ; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night ; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. 2 Peter iii. 8, 9, 10.

And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth, lifted up his hand to heaven, And sware by him that liveth forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that therein are, and the earth and the things that therein are, and the sea and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer. Rev. x. 5, 6.

And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation ; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. Rev. xiv. 9, 10.

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. Rev. xx. 11.

DISCOURSE. V.

And Nathan departed unto his house ; and the Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick. David, therefore, besought God for the child: and David fasted and went in and lay all night upon the earth. And the elders of his house arose, and went to him, to raise him up from the earth; but he would not neither did he eat bread with them. And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died. And the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead ; for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice, how will he then vex himself, if we tell him that the child is dead? But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead; therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, he is dead. Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord, and worshipped : then he came to his own house : and, when he required, they set bread before him and he did eat. Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? Thou didst fast and weep for the child while it was alive : but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread. And he said, while the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept : for I said who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me. 2 Sam. xii.—15—23.

The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. Psalm xxxiv. 7.

For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. Psalm xci. 2.

And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet ; and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the one end of heaven to the other. Matth. xxiv. 31.

Likewise, I say unto you, There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. Luke xv. 10.

Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation. Heb. i. 14.

DISCOURSE VI.

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil. Matth. iv. 1.

The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world ; and the reapers are the angels. The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity. Matth. xiii. 39, 41.

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Matth. xxv. 41.

And in the synagogue there was a man which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art: the Holy One of God. Luke iv. 33, 34.

Those by the way-side are they that hear; then cometh the devil and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. Luke viii. 12.

But he knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house, falleth. If satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub. Luke xi. 17, 18.

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do; he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. John viii. 44.

And supper being ended, (the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him.) John xiii. 2.

But Peter said, Ananias, why hath satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Acts v. 3.

To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. Acts xxvi. 18.

And the God of peace shall bruise satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen. Rom. xvi. 20.

Lest Satan should get an advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices. 2 Cor. ii. 11.

In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. 2 Cor. iv. 4.

Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. Eph. ii. 2.

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Eph. vi. 11, 12.

For some are already turned aside after Satan. 1 Tim. v. 15.

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil. Heb. ii. 14.

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. James iv. 1.

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; Whom resist, steadfast in the

faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. 1 Peter v. 8, 9.

He that committeth sin, is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. 1 John iii. 8, 10.

Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. 1 John iv. 4.

And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day. Jude 6.

He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. Rev. iii. 5.

And there was war in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world; he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Wo to the inhabiters of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time. Rev. xii. 7, 8, 9, 12.

And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison. And the devil that deceived them was cast into a lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night, forever and ever. Rev. xx. 2, 7, 10.

DISCOURSE VII.

Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him to a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand; And the rain descended and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell; and great was the fall of it. Matt. vii. 24—27.

At that time, Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father! Lord of heaven and earth, bucause thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Matth. xi. 25.

Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drank in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me all ye workers of iniquity. Luke xiii. 26, 27.

For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. Rom. ii. 13.

And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. 1 Cor. ii. 1, 2, 4, 5, 12, 13, 14.

For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. 1 Cor. iii. 19.

For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. 1 Cor. iv. 20.

Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; Who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. 2 Cor. iii. 3, 5, 6.

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power. Eph. i. 17, 18, 19.

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Eph. ii. 1, 10.

For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. 1 Thes. i. 5.

Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass. For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. James i. 18, 22--25.

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. 1 Pet. ii. 9.

But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you; and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. 1 John ii. 20, 27.

END.

A

SERMON,

PREACHED IN

ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, EDINBURGH,

BEFORE

THE SOCIETY

FOR THE

RELIEF OF THE DESTITUTE SICK,

APRIL 18, 1813.

BY THOMAS CHALMERS,

MINISTER OF KILMANY.

SERMON.

PSALM XLI. 1.

"*Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.*"

THERE is an evident want of congeniality between the wisdom of this world, and the wisdom of the Christian. The term "wisdom," carries my reverence along with it. It brings before me a grave and respectable character, whose rationality predominates over the inferior principles of his constitution, and to whom I willingly yield that peculiar homage which the enlightened, and the judicious, and the manly, are sure to exact from a surrounding neighbourhood. Now, so long as this wisdom has for its object some secular advantage, I yield it an unqualified reverence. It is a reverence which all understand, and all sympathise with. If, in private life, a man be wise in the management of his farm, or his fortune, or his family; or if, in public life, he have wisdom to steer an empire through all its difficulties, and to carry it to aggrandizement and renown—the respect which I feel for such wisdom as this, is most cordial and entire, and supported by the universal acknowledgment of all whom I call to attend to it.

Let me now suppose that this wisdom has changed its object—that the man whom I am representing to exem-

plify this respectable attribute, instead of being wise for time, is wise for eternity—that he labours by the faith and sanctification of the gospel for unperishable honours —that, instead of listening to him with admiration at his sagacity, as he talks of business, or politics, or agriculture, we are compelled to listen to him talking of the hope within the vail, and of Christ being the power of God, and the wisdom of God, unto salvation. What becomes of your respect for him now? Are there not some of you who are quite sensible that this respect is greatly impaired, since the wisdom of the man has taken so unaccountable a change in its object and in its direction? The truth is, that the greater part of the world feel no respect at all for a wisdom which they do not comprehend. They may love the innocence of a decidedly religious character, but they feel no sublime or commanding sentiment of veneration for its wisdom. All the truth of the Bible, and all the grandeur of eternity, will not redeem it from a certain degree of contempt. Terms which lower, undervalue, and degrade, suggest themselves to the mind; and strongly dispose it to throw a mean and disagreeable colouring over the man who, sitting loose to the objects of the world, has become altogether a Christian. It is needless to expatiate; but what I have seen myself, and what must have fallen under the observation of many whom I address, carry in them the testimony of experience to the assertion of the Apostle, "that the things of the Spirit of God are foolishness to the natural man, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned."

Now, what I have said of the respectable attribute of wisdom, is applicable, with almost no variation, to another attribute of the human character, to which I would assign the gentler epithet of "lovely." The attribute to which I allude, is that of benevolence. This is the bur-

den of every poet's song, and every eloquent and interesting enthusiast gives it his testimony. I speak not of the enthusiasm of methodists and devotees—I speak of that enthusiasm of fine sentiment which embellishes the pages of elegant literature, and is addressed to all her sighing and amiable votaries, in the various forms of novel, and poetry, and dramatic entertainment. You would think if any thing could bring the Christian at one with the world around him, it would be this; and that, in the ardent benevolence which figures in novels, and sparkles in poetry, there would be an entire congeniality with the benevolence of the gospel. I venture to say, however, that there never existed a stronger repulsion between two contending sentiments, than between the benevolence of the Christian, and the benevolence which is the theme of elegant literature—that the one, with all its accompaniments of tears, and sensibilities, and interesting cottages, is neither felt nor understood by the Christian as such; and the other, with its work and labours of love—its *enduring hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ*, and its living, not to itself, but to the will of Him who died for us, and who rose again, is not only not understood, but positively nauseated, by the poetical *amateur*.

But the contrast does not stop here. The benevolence of the gospel is not only at antipodes with the visionary sons and daughters of poetry, but it even varies in some of its most distinguishing features with the experimental benevolence of real and familiar life. The fantastic benevolence of poetry is now indeed pretty well exploded; and, in the more popular works of the age, there is a benevolence of a far truer and more substantial kind substituted in its place—the benevolence which you meet with among men of business and observation—the benevolence which bustles and finds employment among the most public and ordinary scenes, and which seeks for objects, not

where the flower blows loveliest, and the stream, with its gentle murmurs, falls sweetest on the ear, but finds them in his every day walks—goes in quest of them through the heart of the great city, and is not afraid to meet them in its most putrid lanes and loathsome receptacles.

Now, it must be acknowledged, that this benevolence is of a far more respectable kind than that poetic sensibility, which is of no use, because it admits of no application. Yet I am not afraid to say, that, respectable as it is, it does not come up to the benevolence of the Christian, and is at variance, in some of its most capital ingredients, with the morality of the gospel. It is well, and very well, as far as it goes; and that Christian is wanting to the will of his master who refuses to share and go along with it. The Christian will do all this, but he would like to do more; and it is at the precise point where he proposes to do more, that he finds himself abandoned by the cooperation and good wishes of those who had hitherto supported him. The Christian goes as far as the votary of this useful benevolence, but then he would like to go further, and this is the point at which he is mortified to find that his old coadjutors refuse to go along with him; and that, instead of being strengthened by their assistance, he has their contempt and their ridicule; or, at all events, their total want of sympathy, to contend with. The truth is, that the benevolence I allude to, with all its respectable air of business and good sense, is altogether a secular benevolence. Through all the extent of its operations, it carries in it no reference to the eternal duration of its object. Time, and the accommodations of time, form all its subject and all its exercise. It labors, and often with success, to provide for its object a warm and well-sheltered tenement, but it looks not beyond the few little years when the earthly house of this tabernacle shall be dissolved—when the soul shall be driven from its per-

ishable tenement, and the only benevolence it will acknowledge or care for, will be the benevolence of those who have directed it to a building not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. This, then, is the point at which the benevolence of the gospel separates from that worldly benevolence, to which, as far as it goes, I offer my cheerful and unmingled testimony. The one minds earthly things, the other has its conversation in heaven. Even when the immediate object of both is the same, you will generally perceive an evident distinction in the principle. Individuals, for example, may co-operate, and will often meet in the same room, be members of the same society, and go hand in hand cordially together for the education of the poor. But the forming habits of virtuous industry, and good members of society, which are the sole consideration in the heart of the worldly philanthropist, are but mere accessions in the heart of the Christian. The main impulse of his benevolence lies in furnishing the poor with the means of enjoying that bread of life which came down from heaven, and in introducing them to the knowledge of those scriptures which are the power of God unto salvation to every one who believeth. Now, it is so far a blessing to the world that there is a co-operation in the immediate object. But what I contend for, is, that there is a total want of congeniality in the principle—that the moment you strip the institution of its temporal advantages, and make it repose on the naked grandeur of eternity, it is fallen from, or laughed at, as one of the chimeras of fanaticism, and left to the despised efforts of those whom they esteem to be unaccountable people, who subscribe for missions, and squander their money on Bible societies. Strange effect, you would think, of eternity to degrade the object with which it is connected! But so it is. The blaze of glory, which is thrown around the martyrdom of a patriot or a philosopher, is refused to the martyrdom of

a Christian. When a statesman dies, who lifted his intrepid voice for the liberty of the species, we hear of nothing but of the shrines and the monuments of immortality. Put into his place one of those sturdy reformers, who, unmoved by councils and inquisitions, stood up for the religious liberties of the world: and it is no sooner done, than the full tide of congenial sympathy and admiration is at once arrested. We have all heard of the benevolent apostleship of Howard, and what Christian will be behind his fellows with his applauding testimony? But will they, on the other hand, share his enthusiasm, when he tells them of the apostleship of Paul, who, in the sublimer sense of the term, accomplished the liberty of the captive, and brought them that sat in darkness out of the prison-house? Will they share in the holy benevolence of the apostle, when he pours out his ardent effusions in behalf of his countrymen? They were at that time on the eve of the cruelest sufferings. The whole vengeance of the Roman power was mustering to bear upon them. The siege and destruction of their city form one of the most dreadful tragedies in the history of war. Yet Paul seems to have had another object in his eye. It was their souls and their eternity which engrossed him. Can you sympathise with him in this principle, or join in kindred benevolence with him, when he says, that "my heart's desire and prayer for Israel is that they might be saved?"

But to bring my list of examples to a close, the most remarkable of them all may be collected from the history of the present attempts which are now making to carry the knowledge of divine revelation into the Pagan and uncivilized countries of the world. Now, it may be my ignorance, but I am certainly not aware of the fact, that without a book of religious faith—without religion, in fact, being the errand and occasion, we have never been able in

modern times so far to compel the attention and to subdue the habits of savages, as to throw in among them the use and the possession of a written language. Certain it is, however, at all events, that this very greatest step in the process of converting a wild man of the woods into a humanized member of society, has been accomplished by christian missionaries. They have put into the hands of barbarians this mighty instrument of a written language, and they have taught them how to use it.* They have formed an orthography for wandering and untutored savages. They have given a shape and a name to their barbarous articulations; and the children of men, who lived on the prey of the wilderness, are now forming in village schools to the arts and the decencies of cultivated life. Now, I am not involving you in the controversy whether civilization should precede Christianity, or Christianity should precede civilization. It is not to what has been said on the subject, but to what has been done that we are pointing your attention. We appeal to the fact; and as an illustration of the principle we have been attempting to lay before you, we call upon you to mark the feelings, and the countenance, and the language, of the mere academic moralist, when you put into his hand the authentic and proper document where the fact is recorded—we mean a missionary report, or a missionary magazine. We know that there are men who have so much of the firm nerve and hardihood of philosophy about them, as not to be repelled from truth in whatever shape, or from whatever

* As, for instance, Mr. John Elliot, and the Moravian brethren among the Indians of New-England and Pennsylvania; the Moravians of South-America; Mr. Hans Egede, and the Moravians in Greenland; the latter in Labradore, among the Eskimaux; the missionaries of Otaheite, and other South Sea islands; and Mr. Brunton, under the patronage of the Society for Missions to Africa and the East, who reduced the language of the Susoos, a nation on the coast of Africa, to writing and grammatical form, and printed in it a spelling-book, vocabulary, catechism, and some tracts. Other instances besides might be given.

quarter it comes to them. But there are others of a humbler cast, who have transferred their homage from the omnipotence of truth, to the omnipotence of a name, who, because missionaries, while they are accomplishing the civilization are labouring also for the eternity of savages, have lifted up the cry of fanaticism against them—who, because missionaries revere the word of God, and utter themselves in the language of the New Testament, nauseate every word that comes from them as overrun with the flavour and phraseology of methodism—who, are determined, in short, to abominate all that is missionary, and suffer the very sound of the epithet to fill their minds with an overwhelming association of repugnance, and prejudice, and disgust.

We would not have counted this so remarkable an example, had it not been that missionaries are accomplishing the very object on which the advocates for civilization love to expatiate. They are working for the temporal good far more effectually than any adventurer in the cause ever did before; but mark the want of congeniality between the benevolence of this world, and the benevolence of the Christian; they incur contempt, because they are working for the spiritual and eternal good also. Nor do the earthly blessings which they scatter so abundantly in their way, redeem from scorn the purer and the nobler principle which inspires them.

These observations seem to be an applicable introduction to the subject before us. I call your attention to *the way* in which the Bible enjoins us to take up the care of the poor. It does not say, in the text before us, Commiserate the poor; for, if it said no more than this, it would leave their necessities to be provided for by the random ebullitions of an impetuous and unreflecting sympathy. It provides them with a better security than the mere feeling of compassion—a feeling which, however

useful for the purpose of excitement, must be controlled and regulated. Feeling is but a faint and fluctuating security. Fancy may mislead it. The sober realities of life may disgust it. Disappointment may extinguish it. Ingratitude may embitter it. Deceit, with its counterfeit representations, may allure it to the wrong object. At all events, Time is the little circle within which it in general expatiates. It needs the impression of sensible objects to sustain it; nor can it enter with zeal or with vivacity into the wants of the abstract and invisible soul. The Bible, then, instead of leaving the relief of the poor to the mere instinct of sympathy, makes it a subject for *consideration* —Blessed is he that *considereth* the poor—a grave and prosaic exercise I do allow, and which makes no figure in those high wrought descriptions, where the exquisite tale of benevolence is made up of all the sensibilities of tenderness on the one hand, and of all the ecstacies of gratitude on the other. The Bible rescues the cause from the mischief to which a heedless or unthinking sensibility would expose it. It brings it under the cognizance of a higher faculty—a faculty of steadier operation than to be weary in well-doing, and of sturdier endurance than to give it up in disgust. It calls you to *consider* the poor. It makes the virtue of relieving them a matter of computation as well as of sentiment; and in so doing, it puts you beyond the reach of the various delusions by which you are at one time led to prefer the indulgence of pity to the substantial interest of its object; at another, are led to retire chagrined and disappointed from the scene of duty, because you have not met with the gratitude or the honesty that you laid your account with; at another, are led to expend all your anxieties upon the accommodation of time, and to overlook eternity. It is the office of *consideration* to save you from all these fallacies. Under its tutorage attention to the wants of the poor ripens into prin-

ciple. I want, my brethren, to press its advantages upon you, for I can in no other way recommend the society whose claims I am appointed to lay before you, so effectually to your patronage. My time will only permit me to lay before you a few of their advantages, and I shall therefore confine myself to two leading particulars.

1. The man who considers the poor, instead of slumbering over the emotions of a useless sensibility, among those imaginary beings whom poetry and romance have laid before him in all the elegance of fictitious history, will bestow the labour and the attention of actual business among the poor of the real and the living world. Benevolence is the burden of every romantic tale, and of every poet's song. It is dressed out in all the fairy enchantments of imagery and eloquence. All is beauty to the eye and music to the ear. Nothing seen but pictures of felicity, and nothing heard but the soft whispers of gratitude and affection. The reader is carried along by this soft and delightful representation of virtue. He accompanies his hero through all the fancied varieties of his history. He goes along with him to the cottage of poverty and disease, surrounded, as we may suppose, with all the charms of rural obscurity, and where the murmurs of an adjoining rivulet accord with the finer and more benevolent sensibilities of the mind. He enters this enchanting retirement, and meets with a picture of distress, adorned in all the elegance of fiction. Perhaps a father laid on a bed of languishing, and supported by the labours of a pious and affectionate family, where kindness breathes in every word, and anxiety sits upon every countenance—where the industry of his children struggles in vain to supply the cordials which his poverty denies him—where nature sinks every hour, and all feel a gloomy foreboding, which they strive to conceal, and tremble to express. The hero of romance enters, and the glance of his benevolent eye

enlightens this darkest recess of misery. He turns him to the bed of languishing, tells the sick man that there is still hope, and smiles comfort on his despairing children. Day after day, he repeats his kindness and his charity. They hail his approach as the footsteps of an angel of mercy. The father lives to bless his deliverer. The family reward his benevolence by the homage of an affectionate gratitude; and, in the piety of their evening prayer, offer up thanks to the God of heaven, for opening the hearts of the rich to kindly and beneficent attentions. The reader weeps with delight. The visions of paradise play before his fancy. His tears flow, and his heart dissolves in all the luxury of tenderness.

Now, we do not deny that the members of the Destitute Sick Society *may* at times have met with some such delightful scene to soothe and encourage them. But put the question to any of their visiters, and he will not fail to tell you, that if they had never moved but when they had something like this to excite and to gratify their hearts, they would seldom have moved at all; and their usefulness to the poor would have been reduced to a very humble fraction of what they have actually done for them. What is this but to say, that it is the business of a religious instructor to give you, not the elegant, but the true representation of benevolence—to represent it not so much as a luxurious indulgence to the finer sensibilities of the mind, but according to the sober declaration of Scripture, as a work and as a labonr—as a business in which you must encounter vexation, opposition, and fatigue; where you are not always to meet with that elegance, which allures the fancy, or with that humble and retired adversity, which interests the more tender propensities of the heart; but as a business where reluctance must often be overcome by a sense of duty, and where, though oppressed at every step, by envy, disgust, and disappointment, you are

bound to persevere, in obedience to the law of God, and the sober instigation of principle.

The benevolence of the gospel lies in actions. The benevolence of our fictitious writers, in a kind of high-wrought delicacy of feeling and sentiment. The one dissipates all its fervour in sighs and tears, and idle aspirations—the other reserves its strength for efforts and execution. The one regards it as a luxurious enjoyment for the heart—the other, as a work and business for the hand. The one sits in indolence, and broods, in visionary rapture, over its schemes of ideal philanthropy—the other steps abroad, and enlightens, by its presence, the dark and pestilential hovels of disease. The one wastes away in empty ejaculation—the other gives time and trouble to the work of beneficence—gives education to the orphan—provides clothes for the naked, and lays food on the table of the hungry. The one is indolent and capricious, and often does mischief by the occasional overflowings of a whimsical and ill-directed charity—the other is vigilant and discerning, and takes care lest his distributions be injudicious, and the effort of benevolence be misapplied. The one is soothed with the luxury of feeling, and reclines in easy and indolent satisfaction—the other shakes off the deceitful languor of contemplation and solitude, and delights in a scene of activity. Remember, that virtue, in general, is not to feel, but to do; not merely to conceive a purpose, but to carry that purpose into execution; not merely to be overpowered by the impression of a sentiment, but to practise what it loves, and to imitate what it admires.

To be benevolent in speculation, is often to be selfish in action and in reality. The vanity and the indolence of man delude him into a thousand inconsistencies. He professes to love the name and the semblance of virtue, but the labour of exertion and of self-denial terrifies him

from attempting it. The emotions of kindness are delightful to his bosom, but then they are little better than a selfish indulgence—they terminate in his own enjoyment—they are a mere refinement of luxury. His eye melts over the picture of fictitious distress, while not a tear is left for the actual starvation and misery with which he is surrounded. It is easy to indulge the imaginations of a visionary heart in going over a scene of fancied affliction, because here there is no sloth to overcome—no avaricious propensity to control—no offensive or disgusting circumstance to allay the unmingled impression of sympathy which a soft and elegant picture is calculated to awaken. It is not so easy to be benevolent in action and in reality, because here there is fatigue to undergo—there is time and money to give—there is the mortifying spectacle of vice, and folly, and ingratitude, to encounter. We like to give you the fair picture of love to man, because to throw over it false and fictitious embellishments, is injurious to its cause. These elevate the fancy by romantic visions which can never be realized. They embitter the heart by the most severe and mortifying disappointments, and often force us to retire in disgust from what heaven has intended to be the theatre of our discipline and preparation. Take the representation of the Bible. Benevolence is a work and a labour. It often calls for the severest efforts of vigilance and industry—a habit of action not to be acquired in the school of fine sentiment, but in the walks of business, in the dark and dismal receptacles of misery—in the hospitals of disease—in the putrid lanes of great cities, where poverty dwells in lank and ragged wretchedness, agonized with pain, faint with hunger, and shivering in a frail and unsheltered tenement.

You are not to conceive yourself a real lover of your species, and entitled to the praise or the reward of benevolence because you weep over a fictitious representation of

human misery. A man may weep in the indolence of a studious and contemplative retirement; he may breathe all the tender aspirations of humanity; but what avails all this warm and diffusive benevolence, if it is never exerted—if it never rise to execution—if it never carry him to the accomplishment of a single benevolent purpose—if it shrink from activity, and sicken at the pain of fatigue? It is easy, indeed, to come forward with the cant and hypocrisy of fine sentiment—to have a heart trained to the emotions of benevolence, while the hand refuses the labours of discharging its offices—to weep for amusement, and to have nothing to spare for human suffering but the tribute of an indolent and unmeaning sympathy. Many of you must be acquainted with that corruption of Christian doctrine, which has been termed Antinomianism. It professes the highest reverence for the Supreme Being, while it refuses obedience to the lessons of his authority. It professes the highest gratitude for the sufferings of Christ, while it refuses that course of life and action, which he demands of his followers. It professes to adore the tremendous Majesty of heaven, and to weep in shame and in sorrow over the sinfulness of degraded humanity, while every day it insults Heaven by the enormity of its misdeeds, and evinces the insincerity of its wilful perseverance in the practice of iniquity. This Antinomianism is generally condemned; and none reprobate it more than the votaries of fine sentiment——your men of taste and elegant literatue—your epicures of feeling, who riot in all the luxury of theatrical emotion, and who, in their admiration of what is tender, and beautiful, and cultivated, have always turned with disgust from the doctrines of a sour and illiberal theology. We may say to such, as Nathan to David, "Thou art the man." Theirs is to all intents and purposes Antinomianism—and an Antino-

mianism of a far more dangerous and deceitful kind, than the Antinomianism of a spurious and pretended orthodoxy. In the Antinomianism of religion, there is nothing to fascinate or deceive you. It wears an air of repulsive bigotry, more fitted to awaken disgust, than to gain the admiration of proselytes. There is a glaring deformity in its aspect, which alarms you at the very outset, and is an outrage to that natural morality which, dark and corrupted as it is, is still strong enough to lift its loud remonstrance against it. But in the Antinomianism of high-wrought sentiment, there is a deception far more insinuating. It steals upon you under the semblance of virtue. It is supported by the delusive colouring of imagination and poetry. It has all the graces and embellishments of literature to recommend it. Vanity is soothed, and conscience lulls itself to repose in this dream of feeling and of indolence.

Let us dismiss these lying vanities, and regulate our lives by the truth and soberness of the New Testament. Benevolence is not in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth. It is a business with men as they are, and with human life as drawn by the rough hand of experience. It is a duty which you must perform at the call of principle, though there be no voice of eloquence to give splendour to your exertions, and no music or poetry to lead your willing footsteps through the bowers of enchantment. It is not the impulse of high and ecstatic emotion. It is an exertion of principle. You must go to the poor man's cottage, though no verdure flourish around it, and no rivulet be nigh to delight you by the gentleness of its murmurs. If you look for the romantic simplicity of fiction, you will be disappointed: but it is your duty to persevere, in spite of every discouragement. Benevolence is not merely a feeling, but a principle; not a dream of

rapture for the fancy to indulge in, but a business for the hand to execute.

It must now be obvious to all of you, that it is not enough that you give money, and add your name to the contributors of charity—you must give it with judgment. You must give your time and your attention. You must descend to the trouble of examination. You must rise from the repose of contemplation, and make yourself acquainted with the objects of your benevolent exercises. Will he husband your charity with care, or will he squander it away in idleness and dissipation? Will he satisfy himself with the brutal luxury of the moment, and neglect the supply of his more substantial necessities, or suffer his children to be trained in ignorance and depravity? Will charity corrupt him by laziness? What is his peculiar necessity? Is it the want of health or the want of employment? Is it the pressure of a numerous family? Does he need medicine to administer to the diseases of his children? Does he need fuel or raiment to protect them from the inclemency of winter? Does he need money to satisfy the yearly demands of his landlord, or to purchase books and to pay for the education of his offspring?

To give money is not to do all the work and labour of benevolence. You must go to the poor man's bed. You must lend your hand to the work of assistance. You must examine his accounts. You must try to recover those debts which are due to his family. You must try to recover those wages which are detained by the injuries or the rapacity of his master. You must employ your mediation with his superiors. You must represent to them the necessities of his situation. You must solicit their assistance, and awaken their feelings to the tale of his calamity. This is benevolence in its plain, and sober, and substantial reality, though eloquence may have with-

held its imagery, and poetry may have denied its graces and its embellishments. This is true and unsophisticated goodness. It may be recorded in no earthly documents; but if done under the influence of christian principle—in a word, done unto Jesus, it is written in the book of heaven, and will give a new lustre to that crown to which his disciples look forward in time, and will wear through eternity.

You have all heard of the division of labour, and I wish you to understand, that the advantage of this principle may be felt as much in the operations of charity, as in the operations of trade and manufactures. The work of beneficence does not lie in the one act of giving money; there must be the act of attendance; there must be the act of inquiry; there must be the act of judicious application. But I can conceive that an individual may be so deficient in the varied experience and attention which a work so extensive demands, that he may retire in disgust and discouragement from the practice of charity altogether. The institution of a Society, such as this, saves this individual to the cause. It takes upon itself all the subsequent acts in the work and labour of love, and restricts his part to the mere act of giving money. It fills the middle space between the dispensers and the recipients of charity. The habits of many who now hear me, may disqualify them for the work of examination. They may have no time for it; they may live at a distance from the objects; they may neither know how to introduce, nor how to conduct themselves in the management of all the details; their want of practice and of experience may disable them for the work of repelling imposition; they should try to gain the necessary habits; it is right that every individual among us, should each, in his own sphere, consider the poor, and qualify themselves for a judicious and discriminating charity. But, in the mean

time, the Society for the Relief of the Destitute Sick, is an instrument ready made to our hands. Avail yourselves of this instrument immediately, as, by the easiest part of the exercise of charity, which is to give money, you carry home to the poor all the benefits of its most difficult exercises. The experience which you want, the members of this laudable Society are in possession of. By the work and observation of years, a stock of practical wisdom is now accumulated among them. They have been long inured to all that is loathsome and discouraging in this good work, and they have nerve, and hardihood, and principle to front it. They are every way qualified to be the carriers of your bounty, for it is a path they have long travelled in. Give the money, and these conscientious men will soon bring it into contact with the right objects. They know the way through all the obscurities of this metropolis, and they can bring the offerings of your charity to people whom you will never see, and into houses which you will never enter. It is not easy to conceive, far less to compute the extent of human misery; but these men can give you experience for it. They can show you their registers of the sick and of the dying; they are familiar with disease in all its varieties of faintness, and breathlessness, and pain.—Sad union! they are called to witness it in conjunction with poverty; and well do they know that there is an eloquence in the imploring looks of these helpless poor, which no description can set before you. Oh! my brethren, figure to yourselves the calamity in all its soreness, and measure your bounty by the actual greatness of the claims, and not by the feebleness of their advocate.

I have trespassed upon your patience; but, at the hazard of carrying my address to a length that is unusual, I must still say more. Nor would I ever forgive myself if I neglected to set the eternity of the poor in all its im-

portance before you. This is the second point of consideration to which I wish to direct you. The man who considers the poor will give his chief anxiety to the wants of their eternity. It must be evident to all of you that this anxiety is little felt. I do not appeal for the evidence of this to the selfish part of mankind—there we are not to expect it. I go to those who are really benevolent—who have a wish to make others happy, and who take trouble in so doing; and it is a striking observation, how little the salvation of these others is the object of that benevolence which makes them so amiable. It will be found that in and by far the greater number of instances, this principle is all consumed on the accommodations of time, and the necessities of the body. It is the meat which feeds them—the garment which covers them—the house which shelters them—the money which purchases all things; these, I say, are what form the chief topics of benevolent anxieties. Now, we do not mean to discourage this principle. We cannot afford it; there is too little of it; and it forms too refreshing an exception to that general selfishness which runs throughout the haunts of business and ambition, for us to say any thing against it. We are not cold-blooded enough to refuse our delighted concurrence to an exertion so amiable in its principle, and so pleasing in the warm and comfortable spectacle which it lays before us. The poor, it is true, ought never to forget, that it is to their own industry, and to the wisdom and economy of their own management, that they are to look for the elements of subsistence—that if idleness and prodigality shall lay hold of the mass of our population, no benevolence, however unbounded, can ever repair a mischief so irrecoverable—that if they will not labour for themselves, it is not in the power of the rich to create a sufficiency for them; and that though every heart were opened, and every purse emptied in the cause, it would absolutely go

for nothing towards forming a well-fed, a well-lodged, or a well conditioned peasantry. Still, however, there are cases which no foresight could prevent, and no industry could provide for—where the blow falls heavy and unexpected on some devoted son or daughter of misfortune, and where, though thoughtlessness and folly may have had their share, benevolence, not very nice in its calculations, will feel the overpowering claim of actual, helpless, and imploring misery. Now, I again offer my cheerful testimony to such benevolence as this ; I count it delightful to see it singling out its object, and sustaining it against the cruel pressure of age and of indigence ; and when I enter a cottage where I see a warmer fire-side, or more substantial provision, than the visible means can account for, I say that the landscape, in all its summer glories, does not offer an object so gratifying, as when referred to the vicinity of the great man's house, and the people who live in it, and am told that I will find my explanation *there*. Kind and amiable people ! your benevolence is most lovely in its display, but Oh ! it is perishable in its consequences. Does it never occur to you, that in a few years this favourite will die—that he will go to the place where neither cold nor hunger will reach him, but that a mighty interest remains, of which both of us may know the certainty, though neither you nor I can calculate the extent. Your benevolence is too short.—It does not shoot far enough a-head.—It is like regaling a child with a sweetmeat or a toy, and then abandoning the happy unreflecting infant to exposure. You make the poor old man happy with your crumbs and your fragments, but he is an infant on the mighty range of infinite duration ; and will you leave the soul, which has the infinity to go through, to its chance ? How comes it that the grave should throw so impenetrable a shroud over the realities of eternity ? How comes it that heaven, and hell, and judgment, should

be treated as so many nonentities, and that there should be as little real and operative sympathy felt for the soul, which lives forever, as for the body after it is dead, or for the dust into which it moulders? Eternity is longer than time; the arithmetic, my brethren, is all on one side upon this question; and the wisdom which calculates, and guides itself by calculation, gives its weighty and respectable support to what may be called the benevolence of faith.

Now, if there be one employment more fitted than another to awaken this benevolence, it is the peculiar employment of that Society for which I am now pleading. I would have anticipated such benevolence from the situation they occupy, and the information before the public bears testimony to the fact. The truth is, that the diseases of the body may be looked upon as so many outlets through which the soul finds its way to eternity. Now, it is at these outlets that the members of this Society have stationed themselves. This is the interesting point of survey at which they stand, and from which they command a look of both worlds. They have placed themselves in the avenues which lead from time to eternity, and they have often to witness the awful transition of a soul hovering at the entrance—struggling its way through the valley of the shadow of death, and at last breaking loose from the confines of all that is visible. Do you think it likely that men, with such spectacles before them, will withstand the sense of eternity? No, my brethren, they cannot, they have not. Eternity, I rejoice to announce to you, is not forgotten by them; and with their care for the diseases of the body, they are neither blind nor indifferent to the fact, that the soul is diseased also. We know it well. There is an indolent and superficial theology, which turns its eyes from the danger, and feels no pressing call for the application of the reme-

dy—which reposes more in its own vague and self-assumed conceptions of the mercy of God, than in the firm and consistent representations of the New Testament—which overlooks the existence of disease altogether, and therefore feels no alarm, and exerts no urgency in the business —which, in the face of all the truths and all the severities that are uttered in the word of God, leaves the soul to its chance ; or, in other words, by neglecting to administer every thing specific for the salvation of the soul, leaves it to perish. We do not want to involve you in controversies ; we only ask you to open the New Testament and attend to the obvious meaning of a word which occurs frequently in its pages—we mean the word *saved.* The term surely implies, that the present state of the thing to be saved is a lost and an undone state. If a tree be in a healthful state from its infancy, you never apply the term saved to it, though you see its beautiful foliage, its flourishing blossoms, its abundant produce, and its progressive ascent through all the varieties incidental to a sound and a prosperous tree. But if it were diseased in its infancy, and ready to perish, and if it were restored by management and artificial applications, then you would say of this tree that it was *saved ;* and the very term implies some previous state of uselessness and corruption. What, then, are we to make of the frequent occurrence of this term in the New Testament, as applied to a human being? If men come into this world pure and innocent, and have nothing more to do but to put forth the powers with which nature has endowed them, and so rise through the progressive stages of virtue and excellence, to the rewards of immortality, you would not say of these men that they were saved when they were translated to these rewards. These rewards of man are the natural effects of his obedience, and the term *saved* is not at all applicable to such a supposition. But the God of the Bible says differently.

If a man obtain heaven at all, it is by being saved. He is in a diseased state, and it is by the healing application of the blood of the Son of God, that he is restored from that state. The very title applied to him proves the same thing. He is called *our Saviour*. The deliverance, which he effects is called our salvation. The men whom he doth deliver are called the *saved*. Doth not this imply some previous state of disease and helplessness? And from the frequent and incidental occurrence of this term, may we not gather an additional testimony to the truth of what is elsewhere more expressly revealed to us, that we are lost by nature, and that to obtain recovery, we must be found in Him who came to seek and to save that which is lost. He that believeth on the Son of God shall be saved, but he that believeth not, the wrath of God abideth on him.

We know that there are some who loathe this representation; but this is just another example of the substantial interests of the poor being sacrificed to mismanagement and delusion. It is to be hoped that there are many who have looked the disease fairly in the face, and are ready to reach forward the remedy adapted to relieve it. We should have no call to attend to the spiritual interests of men, if they could safely be left to themselves, and to the spontaneous operation of those powers with which it is supposed that nature has endowed them. But this is not the state of the case. We come into the world with the principles of sin and condemnation within us; and, in the congenial atmosphere of this world's example, these ripen fast for the execution of the sentence. During the period of this short but interesting passage to another world, the remedy is in the gospel held out to all, and the freedom and universality of its invitations, while it opens assured admission to all who will, must aggravate the weight and severity of the sentence to those who will

not; and upon them the dreadful energy of that saying will be accomplished,—"How shall they escape if they neglect so great a salvation?"

We know part of your labours for the eternity of the poor. We know that you have brought the Bible into contact with many a soul. And we are sure that this is suiting the remedy to the disease; for the Bible contains those words which are the power of God through faith unto salvation, to every one who believes them.

To this established instrument for working faith in the heart, add the instrument of hearing. When you give the Bible, accompany the gift with the living energy of a human voice—let prayer, and advice, and explanation, be brought to act upon them; and let the warm and deeply felt earnestness of your hearts, discharge itself upon theirs in the impressive tones of sincerity, and friendship, and good will. This is going substantially to work. It is, if I may use the expression, bringing the right element to bear upon the case before you; and be assured, every treatment of a convinced and guilty mind is superficial and ruinous, which does not lead it to the Saviour, and bring before it his sacrifice and atonement, and the influences of that spirit bestowed through his obedience on all who believe on Him.

While in the full vigour of health, we may count it enough to take up with something short of this. But —striking testimony to evangelical truth! go to the awful reality of a human soul on the eve of its departure from the body, and you will find that all those vapid sentimentalities which partake not of the substantial doctrine of the New Testament, are good for nothing. Hold up your face, my brethren, for the truth and simplicity of the Bible. Be not ashamed of its phraseology. It is the right instrument to handle in the great work of calling a human soul out of darkness into marvellous light. Stand firm

and secure on the impregnable principle, that this is the word of God, and that all taste, and imagination, and science, must give way before its overbearing authority. Walk in the footsteps of your Saviour, in the twofold office of caring for the diseases of the body, and administering to the wants of the soul; and though you may fail in the former—though the patient may never arise and walk, yet, by the blessing of Heaven upon your fervent and effectual endeavours, the latter object may be gained—the soul may be lightened of all its anxieties—the whole burden of its diseases may be swept away—it may be of good cheer, because its sins are forgiven—and the right direction may be impressed upon it, which will carry it forward in progress to a happy eternity. Death may not be averted, but death may be disarmed. It may be stript of its terrors, and instead of a devouring enemy, it may be hailed as a messenger of triumph.

THOUGHTS ON UNIVERSAL PEACE.

A

SERMON,

DELIVERED ON

THURSDAY, JANUARY 18, 1816,

THE DAY OF NATIONAL THANKSGIVING

FOR THE RESTORATION OF PEACE.

BY REV. THOMAS CHALMERS,

Minister of the Tron Church, Glasgow.

SERMON.

ISAIAH II. 4.

"Nations shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

THERE are a great many passages in Scripture which warrant the expectation that a time is coming, when an end shall be put to war—when its abominations and its cruelties shall be banished from the face of the earth—when those restless elements of ambition and jealousy which have so long kept the species in a state of unceasing commotion, and are ever and anon sending another and another wave over the field of this world's politics, shall at length be hushed into a placid and ever-during calm; and many and delightful are the images which the Bible employs, as guided by the light of prophecy, it carries us forward to those millennial days, when the reign of peace shall be established, and the wide charity of the gospel, which is confined by no limits, and owns no distinctions, shall embosom the whole human race within the ample grasp of one harmonious and universal family.

But before I proceed, let me attempt to do away a delusion which exists on the subject of prophecy. Its fulfilments are all certain, say many, and we have therefore nothing to do, but to wait for them in passive and indolent

expectation. The truth of God stands in no dependance on human aid to vindicate the immutability of all his announcements; and the power of God stands in no need of the feeble exertions of man to hasten the accomplishment of any of his purposes. Let us therefore sit down quietly in the attitude of spectators—let us leave the Divinity to do his own work in his own way, and mark, by the progress of a history over which we have no controul, the evolution of his designs, and the march of his wise and beneficent administration.

Now, it is very true, that the Divinity will do his own work in his own way, but if he choose to tell us that that way is not without the instrumentality of men, but by their instrumentality, might not this sitting down into the mere attitude of spectators, turn out to be a most perverse and disobedient conclusion? It is true, that his purpose will obtain its fulfilment, whether we shall offer or not to help it forward by our co-operation. But if the object is to be brought about, and if, in virtue of the same sovereignty by which he determined upon the object, he has also determined on the way which leads to it, and that that way shall be by the acting of human principle, and the putting forth of human exertion, then let us keep back our co-operation as we may, God will raise up the hearts of others to that which we abstain from; and they, admitted into the high honour of being fellow-workers with God, may do homage to the truth of his prophecy, while we, perhaps, may unconsciously do dreadful homage to the truth of another warning, and another prophecy. "I work a work in your days which you shall not believe, though a man declare it unto you. Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish."

Now this is the very way in which prophecies have been actually fulfilled. The return of the people of Israel to their own land was an event predicted by inspira-

tion, and was brought about by the stirring up of the spirit of Cyrus, who felt himself charged with the duty of building a house to God at Jerusalem. The pouring out of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost was foretold by the Saviour ere he left the world, and was accomplished upon men who assembled themselves together at the place to which they were commanded to repair; and there they waited, and they prayed. The rapid propagation of Christianity in those days was known by the human agents of this propagation, to be made sure by the word of prophecy; but the way in which it was actually made sure, was by the strenuous exertions, the unexampled heroism, the holy devotedness and zeal of martyrs, and apostles, and evangelists. And even now, my brethren, while no professing Christian can deny that their faith is to be one day the faith of all countries; but while many of them idly sit and wait the time of God putting forth some mysterious and unheard of agency, to bring about the universal diffusion, there are men who have betaken themselves to the obvious expedient of going abroad among the nations, and teaching them; and though derided by an undeserving world, they seem to be the very men pointed out by the Bible, who are going to and fro increasing the knowledge of its doctrines, and who will be the honoured instruments of carrying into effect the most splendid of all its anticipations.

Now, the same holds true, I apprehend, of the prophecy in my text. The abolition of war will be the effect not of any sudden or resistless visitation from heaven on the character of men—not of any mystical influence working with all the omnipotence of a charm on the passive hearts of those who are the subjects of it—not of any blind or overruling fatality which will come upon the earth at some distant period of its history, and about which, we, of the present day, have nothing to do but to

look silently on, without concern, and without co-operation. The prophecy of a peace as universal as the spread of the human race, and as enduring as the moon in the firmament, will meet its accomplishment, ay, and at that very time which is already fixed by Him who seeth the end of all things from the beginning thereof. But it will be brought about by the activity of men. It will be done by the philanthropy of thinking and intelligent Christians. The conversion of the Jews—the spread of gospel light among the regions of idolatry—these are distinct subjects of prophecy, on which the faithful of the land are now acting, and to the fulfilment of which they are givnig their zeal and their energy. I conceive the prophecy which relates to the final abolition of war will be taken up in the same manner, and the subject will be brought to the test of christian principle, and many will unite to spread a growing sense of its follies and its enormities, over the countries of the world—and the public will be enlightened not by the factious and turbulent declamations of a party, but by the mild dissemination of gospel sentiment through the land—and the prophecy contained in this book will pass into effect and accomplishment, by no other influence than the influence of its ordinary lessons on the hearts and consciences of individuals—and the measure will first be carried in one country, not by the unhallowed violence of discontent, but by the control of general opinion, expressed on the part of a people, who, if Christian, in their repugnance to war will be equally Christian in all the loyalities and subjections, and meek unresisting virtues of the New Testament—and the sacred fire of good-will to the children of men will spread itself through all climes, and through all latitudes—and thus by scriptural truth conveyed with power from one people to another, and taking its ample round among all the tribes and families of the earth, shall we arrive at the

magnificent result of peace throughout all its provinces, and security in all its dwelling-places.

In the further prosecution of this discourse, I shall, first, expatiate a little on the evils of war.

In the second place, I shall direct your attention to the obstacles which stand in the way of its extinction, and which threaten to retard for a time the accomplishment of the prophecy I have now selected for your consideration.

And, in the Third place, I shall endeavour to point out, what can only be done at present in a hurried and superficial manner, some of the expedients by which these obstacles may be done away.

1. I shall expatiate a little on the evils of war. The mere existence of the prophecy in my text, is a sentence of condemnation upon war, and stamps a criminality on its very forehead. So soon as Christianity shall gain a full ascendancy in the world, from that moment war is to disappear. We have heard that there is something noble in the art of war; that there is something generous in the ardour of that fine chivalric spirit which kindles in the hour of alarm, and rushes with delight among the thickest scenes of danger and of enterprise;—that man is never more proudly arrayed, than when, elevated by a contempt for death, he puts on his intrepid front, and looks serene, while the arrows of destruction are flying on every side of him;—that expunge war, and you expunge some of the brightest names in the catalogue of human virtue, and demolish that theatre on which have been displayed some of the sublimest energies of the human character. It is thus that war has been invested with a most pernicious splendour, and men have offered to justify it as a blessing and an ornament to society, and attempts have been made to throw a kind of imposing morality around it; and one might almost be reconciled to the whole train of its calamities and its horrors, did he not believe his

Bible, and learn from its information, that in the days of perfect righteousness, there will be no war;—that so soon as the character of man has had the last finish of Christian principle thrown over it, from that moment all the instruments of war will be thrown aside, and all its lessons will be forgotten; that therefore what are called the virtues of war, are no virtues at all, or that a better and a worthier scene will be provided for their exercise; but in short, that at the commencement of that blissful era, when the reign of heaven shall be established, war will take its departure from the world with all the other plagues and atrocities of the species.

But apart altogether from this testimony to the evil of war, let us just take a direct look of it, and see whether we can find its character engraved on the aspect it bears to the eye of an attentive observer. The stoutest heart of this assembly would recoil, were he who owns it, to behold the destruction of a single individual by some deed of violence. Were the man who at this moment stands before you in the full play and energy of health, to be in another moment laid by some deadly aim a lifeless corpse at your feet, there is not one of you who would not prove how strong are the relentings of nature at a spectacle so hideous as death. There are some of you who would be haunted for whole days by the image of horror you had witnessed—who would feel the weight of a most oppressive sensation upon your heart, which nothing but time could wear away—who would be so pursued by it as to be unfit for business or for enjoyment—who would think of it through the day, and it would spread a gloomy disquietude over your waking moments—who would dream of it at night, and it would turn that bed which you courted as a retreat from the torments of an ever-meddling memory, into a scene of restlessness.

But generally the death of violence is not instantaneous,

and there is often a sad and dreary interval between its final consummation, and the infliction of the blow which causes it. The winged messenger of destruction has not found its direct avenue to that spot, where the principle of life is situated—and the soul, finding obstacles to its immediate egress, has to struggle it for hours, ere it can make its weary way through the winding avenues of that tenement, which has been torn open by a brother's hand. O! my brethren, if there be something appalling in the suddenness of death, think not that when gradual in its advances, you will alleviate the horrors of this sickening contemplation, by viewing it in a milder form. O! tell me, if there be any relentings of pity in your bosom, how could you endure it, to behold the agonies of the dying man—as goaded by pain, he grasps the cold ground in convulsive energy, or faint with the loss of blood, his pulse ebbs low, and the gathering paleness spreads itself over his countenance; or wrapping himself round in despair, he can only mark by a few feeble quiverings, that life still lurks and lingers in his lacerated body; or lifting up a faded eye, he casts on you a look of imploring helplessness, for that succour which no sympathy can yield him. It may be painful to dwell on such a representation; but this is the way in which the cause of humanity is served. The eye of the sentimentalist turns away from its sufferings, and he passes by on the other side, lest he hear that pleading voice, which is armed with a tone of remonstrance so vigorous as to disturb him. He cannot bear thus to pause, in imagination, on the distressing picture of one individual, but multiply it ten thousand times; say, how much of all this distress has been heaped together upon a single field; give us the arithmetic of this accumulated wretchedness, and lay it before us with all the accuracy of an official computation —and strange to tell, not one sigh is lifted up among the

crowd of eager listeners, as they stand on tiptoe, and catch every syllable of utterance, which is read to them out of the registers of death. O! say, what mystic spell is that, which so blinds us to the sufferings of our brethren; which deafens to our ear the voice of bleeding humanity, when it is aggravated by the shriek of dying thousands; which makes the very magnitude of the slaughter, throw a softening disguise over its cruelties, and its horrors; which causes us to eye with indifference, the field that is crowded with the most revolting abominations, and arrests that sigh, which each individual would singly have drawn from us, by the report of the many who have fallen, and breathed their last in agony, along with them.

I am not saying that the burden of all this criminality rests upon the head of the immediate combatants. It lies somewhere, but who can deny that a soldier may be a Christian, and that from the bloody field on which his body is laid, his soul may wing its ascending way to the shores of a peaceful eternity. But when I think that the Christians, even of the great world, form but a very little flock, and that an army is not a propitious soil for the growth of christian principle—when I think on the character of one such army, that had been led on for years by a ruffian ambition, and been inured to scenes of barbarity, and had gathered a most ferocious hardihood of soul, from the many enterprises of violence to which an unprincipled commander had carried them—when I follow them to the field of battle, and further think, that on both sides of an exasperated contest—the gentleness of Christianity can have no place in almost any bosom; but that nearly every heart is lighted up with fury, and breathes a vindictive purpose against a brother of the species, I cannot but reckon it among the most fearful of the calamities of war—that while the work

of death is thickening along its ranks, so many disembodied spirits should pass into the presence of Him who sitteth upon the throne, in such a posture, and with such a preparation.

I have no time, and assuredly as little taste, for expatiating on a topic so melancholy, nor can I afford at present, to set before you a vivid picture of the other miseries which war carries in its train—how it desolates every country through which it rolls, and spreads violation and alarm among its villages—how, at its approach, every home pours forth its trembling fugitives—how all the rights of property, and all the provisions of justice must give way before its devouring exactions—how, when Sabbath comes, no Sabbath charm comes along with it—and for the sound of the church bell, which wont to spread its music over some fine landscape of nature, and summon rustic worshippers to the house of prayer—nothing is heard but the deathful vollies of the battle, and the maddening outcry of infuriated men—how, as the fruit of victory, an unprincipled licentiousness, which no discipline can restrain, is suffered to walk at large among the people—and all that is pure, and reverend, and holy, in the virtue of families, is cruelly trampled on, and held in the bitterest derision. Oh! my brethren, were we to pursue those details, which no pen ever attempts, and no chronicle perpetuates, we should be tempted to ask, what that is which civilization has done for the character of the species? It has thrown a few paltry embellishments over the surface of human affairs, and for the order of society, it has reared the defences of law around the rights and the property of the individuals who compose it. But let war, legalized as you may, and ushered into the field with all the parade of forms and manifestos—let this war only have its season, and be suffered to overleap these artificial defences, and you will soon see how much of the security

of the commonwealth is due to positive restrictions, and how little of it is due to a natural sense of justice among men. I know well, that the plausibilities of human character, which abound in every modern and enlightened society, have been mustered up to oppose the doctrine of the Bible, on the woful depravity of our race. But out of the history of war, I can gather for this doctrine the evidence of experiment. It tells me, that man when left to himself and let loose among his fellows, to walk after the counsel of his own heart, and in the sight of his own eyes, will soon discover how thin that tinsel is, which the boasted hand of civilization has thrown over him. And we have only to blow the trumpet of war, and proclaim to man the hour of his opportunity, that his character may show itself in its essential elements—and that we may see how many, in this our moral and enlightened day, would spring forward, as to a jubilee of delight, and prowl like the wild men of the woods, amidst scenes of rapacity, and cruelty, and violence.

II. But let me hasten away from this part of the subject, and in the second place, direct your attention to those obstacles which stand in the way of the extinction of war, and which threaten to retard, for a time, the accomplishment of the prophecy I have now selected for your consideration.

Is this the time, it may be asked, to complain of obstacles to the extinction of war, when peace has been given to the nations, and we are assembled to celebrate its triumphs? Is this day of high and solemn gratulation, to be turned to such forebodings as these? The whole of Europe is now at rest from the tempest which convulsed it—and a solemn treaty with all its adjustments, and all its guarantees, promises a firm perpetuity to the repose of the world. We have long fought for a happier order of things, and at length we have established it—and the

hard-earned bequest, we hand down to posterity as a rich inheritance, won by the labours and the sufferings of the present generation. That gigantic ambition which stalked in triumph over the firmest and the oldest of our monarchies, is now laid—and can never again burst forth from the confinement of its prison-hold to waken a new uproar, and to send forth new troubles over the face of a desolated world.

Now, in reply to this, let it be observed, that every interval of repose is precious; every breathing time from the work of violence is to be rejoiced in by the friends of humanity; every agreement among the powers of the earth, by which a temporary respite can be gotten from the calamities of war, is so much reclaimed from the amount of those miseries that afflict the world, and of those crimes, the cry of which ascendeth unto heaven, and bringeth down the judgments of God on this dark and rebellious province of his creation. I trust, that on this day, gratitude to Him who alone can still the tumults of the people, will be the sentiment of every heart; and I trust that none who now hear me, will refuse to evince his gratitude to the Author of the New Testament, by their obedience to one of the most distinct and undoubted of its lessons; I mean the lesson of a reverential and submissive loyalty. I cannot pass an impartial eye over this record of God's will, without perceiving the utter repugnance that there is between the spirit of Christianity, and the factious, turbulent, unquenchable, and ever-meddling spirit of political disaffection. I will not compromise by the surrender of a single jot or tittle the integrity of that preceptive code which my Saviour hath left behind him for the obedience of his disciples. I will not detach the very minutest of its features, from the fine picture of morality that Christ hath bequeathed, both by commandment and example,

to adorn the nature he condescended to wear—and sure I am that the man who has drunk in the entire spirit of the gospel—who, reposing himself on the faith of its promised immortality, can maintain an elevated calm amid all the fluctuations of this world's interest—whose exclusive ambition it is to be the unexcepted pupil of pure, and spiritual and self-denying Christianity—sure I am that such a man will honour the king and all who are in authority—and be subject unto them for the sake of conscience—and render unto them all their dues—and not withhold a single fraction of the tribute they impose upon him—and be the best of subjects, just because he is the best of Christians—resisting none of the ordinances of God, and living a quiet and a peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

But it gives me pleasure to advance a further testimony in behalf of that government with which it has pleased God, who appointeth to all men the bounds of their habitation, to bless that portion of the globe that we occupy. I count it such a government that I not only owe it the loyalty of my principles—but I also owe it the loyalty of my affections. I could not lightly part with my devotion to that government which the other year opened the door to the Christianization of India—I shall never withhold the tribute of my reverence from that government which put an end to the atrocities of the Slave Trade—I shall never forget the triumph, which, in that proudest day of Britain's glory, the cause of humanity gained within the walls of our enlightened Parliament. Let my right hand forget her cunning, ere I forget that country of my birth, where, in defiance to all the clamours of merchantile alarm, every calculation of interest was given to the wind, and braving every hazard, she nobly resolved to shake off the whole burden of the infamy, which lay upon her.

I shall never forget, that how to complete the object in behalf of which she has so honorably led the way, she has walked the whole round of civilized society, and knocked at the door of every government in Europe, and lifted her imploring voice for injured Africa, and pled with the mightiest monarchs of the world, the cause of her outraged shores, and her distracted families. I can neither shut my heart nor my eyes to the fact, that at this moment she is stretching forth the protection of her naval arm, and shielding, to the uttermost of her vigour, that coast where an inhuman avarice is still plying its guilty devices, and aiming to perpetuate among an unoffending people, a trade of cruelty, with all the horrid train of its terrors and abominations. Were such a government as this to be swept from its base, either by the violence of foreign hostility, or by the hands of her own misled and infatuated children—I should never cease to deplore it as the deadliest interruption, which ever had been given to the interests of human virtue, and to the march of human improvement. O! how it should swell every heart, not with pride, but with gratitude, to think that the land of our fathers, with all the iniquities which abound in it, with all the profligacy, which spreads along our streets, and all the profaneness that is heard among our companies—to think that this our land, overspread as it is with the appalling characters of guilt, is still the securest asylum of worth and liberty—that this is the land, from which the most copious emanations of Christianity are going forth to all the quarters of the world—that this is the land, which teems from one end to the other of it with the most splendid designs and enterprises for the good of the species—that this is the land, where public principle is most felt, and public objects are most prosecuted, and the fine impulse of a

public spirit is most ready to carry its generous people beyond the limits of a selfish and contracted patriotism. Yes, and when the heart of the philanthropist is sinking within him at the gloomy spectacle of those crimes and atrocities, which still deform the history of man, I know not a single earthly expedient more fitted to brighten and sustain him, than to turn his eye to the country in which he lives—and there see the most enlightened government in the world acting as the organ of its most moral and intelligent population.

It is not against the government of my country, therefore, that I direct my observations—but against that nature of man in the infirmities of which we all share, and the evil of which no government can extinguish. We have carried a new political arrangement, and we experience the result of it, a temporary calm—but we have not yet carried our way to the citadel of human passions. The elements of war are hushed for a season—but these elements are not destroyed. They still rankle in many an unsubdued heart—and I am too well taught by the history of the past, and the experience of its restless variations, not to believe that they will burst forth again in thunder over the face of society. No, my brethren, it will only be when diffused and vital Christianity comes upon the earth, that an enduring peace will come along with it. The prophecy of my text will obtain its fulfilment—but not till the fulfilment of the verses which go before it;—not till the influence of the gospel has found its way to the human bosom, and plucked out of it the elementary principles of war;—not till the law of love shall spread its melting and all-subduing efficacy, among the children of one common nature;—not till ambition be dethroned from its mastery over the affections of the inner man;—not till the guilty splendours of war shall cease to captivate its admirers, and spread the blaze of a deceitful heroism over

the wholesale butchery of the species ;—not till national pride be humbled, and man shall learn, that if it be individually the duty of each of us in honour to prefer one another; then let these individuals combine as they may, and form societies as numerous and extensive as they may, and each of these be swelled out to the dimensions of an empire, still, that mutual condescension and forbearance remain the unalterable christian duties of these empires to each other ;—not till man learn to revere his brother as man, whatever portion of the globe he occupies, and all the jealousies and preferencies of a contracted patriotism be given to the wind ;—not till war shall cease to be prosecuted as a trade, and the charm of all that interest which is linked with its continuance, shall cease to beguile men in the peaceful walks of merchandise, into a barbarous longing after war ;—not in one word till pride, and jealousy, and interest, and all that is opposite to the law of God and the charity of the gospel, shall be forever eradicated from the character of those who possess an effectual control over the public and political movements of the species ;—not till all this be brought about, and there is not another agent in the whole compass of nature that can bring it about but the gospel of Christ, carried home by the all-subduing power of the Spirit to the consciences of men ;—then, and not till then, my brethren, will peace come to take up its perennial abode with us, and its blessed advent on earth be hailed by one shout of joyful acclamation throughout all its families ;—then, and not till then, will the sacred principle of good-will to men circulate as free as the air of heaven among all countries—and the sun looking out from the firmament, will behold one fine aspect of harmony throughout the wide extent of a regenerated world.

It will only be in the last days, " when it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be

established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow into it: And many people shall go, and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem; and he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people;" then and not till then, "they shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nations shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

The above rapid sketch glances at the chief obstacles to the extinction of war, and in what remains of this discourse, I shall dwell a little more particularly on as many of them as my time will allow me, finding it impossible to exhaust so wide a topic, within the limits of the public services of one day.

The first great obstacle then to the extinction of war, is the way in which the heart of man is carried off from its barbarities and its horrors, by the splendour of its deceitful accompaniments. There is a feeling of the sublime in contemplating the shock of armies, just as there is in contemplating the devouring energy of a tempest, and this so elevates and engrosses the whole man, that his eye is blind to the tears of bereaved parents, and his ear is deaf to the piteous moan of the dying, and the shriek of their desolated families. There is a gracefulness in the picture of a youthful warrior burning for distinction on the field, and lured by this generous aspiration to the deepest of the animated throng, where, in the fell work of death, the opposing sons of valour struggle for a remembrance and a name; and this side of the picture is so much the exclusive object of our regard, as to disguise from our view the mangled carcasses of the

fallen, and the writhing agonies of the hundreds and the hundreds more who have been laid on the cold ground, where they are left to languish and to die. There no eye pities them. No sister is there to weep over them. There no gentle hand is present to ease the dying posture, or bind up the wounds, which, in the maddening fury of the combat, have been given and received by the children of one common father. There death spreads its pale ensigns over every countenance, and when night comes on, and darkness around them, how many a despairing wretch must take up with the bloody field as the untended bed of his last sufferings, without one friend to bear the message of tenderness to his distant home, without one companion to close his eyes.

I avow it. On every side of me I see causes at work which go to spread a most delusive colouring over war, and to remove its shocking barbarities to the back ground of our contemplations altogether. I see it in the history which tells me of the superb appearance of the troops, and the brilliancy of their successive charges. I see it in the poetry which lends the magic of its numbers to the narrative of blood, and transports its many admirers, as by its images, and its figures, and its nodding plumes of chivalry, it throws its treacherous embellishments over a scene of legalized slaughter. I see it in the music which represents the progress of the battle; and where, after being inspired by the trumpet-notes of preparation, the whole beauty and tenderness of a drawing-room are seen to bend over the sentimental entertainment; nor do I hear the utterance of a single sigh to interrupt the death-tones of the thickening contest, and the moans of the wounded men as they fade away upon the ear, and sink into lifeless silence. All, all goes to prove what strange and half-sighted creatures we are. Were it not so, war could never have been seen in any other aspect than

that of unmingled hatefulness; and I can look to nothing but to the progress of Christian sentiment upon earth, to arrest the strong current of its popular and prevailing partiality for war. Then only will an imperious sense of duty lay the check of severe principle, on all the subordinate tastes and faculties of our nature. Then will glory be reduced to its right estimate, and the wakeful benevolence of the gospel chasing away every spell, will be turned by the treachery of no delusion whatever, from its simple but sublime enterprises for the good of the species. Then the reign of truth and quietness will be ushered into the world, and war, cruel, atrocious, unrelenting war, will be stript of its many and its bewildering fascinations.

But again, another obstacle to the extinction of war is a sentiment which seems to be universally gone into, that the rules and promises of the gospel which apply to a single individual, do not apply to a nation of individuals. Just think of the mighty effect it would have on the politics of the world, were this sentiment to be practically deposed from its wonted authority over the counsels and the doings of nations, in their transactions with each other. If forbearance be the virtue of an individual, forbearance is also the virtue of a nation. If it be incumbent on men in honour to prefer each other, it is incumbent on the very largest societies of men, through the constituted organ of their government to do the same. If it be the glory of a man to defer his anger, and to pass over a transgression, that nation mistakes its glory which is so feelingly alive to the slightest insult, and musters up its threats and its armaments upon the faintest shadow of a provocation. If it be the magnanimity of an injured man to abstain from vengeance, and if by so doing, he heap coals of fire upon the head of his enemy, then that is the magnanimous nation, which,

recoiling from violence and from blood, will do no more than send its christian embassy, and prefer its mild and impressive remonstrance; and that is the disgraced nation which will refuse the impressiveness of the moral appeal that has been made to it.—O! my brethren, there must be the breathing of a different spirit to circulate round the globe, ere its christianized nations resign the jealousies which now front them to each other in the scowling attitude of defiance; and much is to do with the people of every land, ere the prophesied influence of the gospel shall bring its virtuous, and its pacifying control to bear with effect on the counsels and governments of the world.

I find that I must be drawing to a close, and that I must forbear entering into several topics on which I meant at one time to expatiate. I wished, in particular, to have laid it fully before you how the extinction of war, though it should withdraw one of those scenes on which man earns the glory of intrepidity; yet it would leave other, and better, and nobler scenes, for the display and the exercise of this respectable attribute. I wished also to explain to you, that however much I admired the general spirit of Quakerism, on the subject of war; yet that I was not prepared to go all the length of its principles, when that war was strictly defensive. It strikes me, that war is to be abolished by the abolition of its aggressive spirit among the different nations of the world. The text seems to tell me that this is the order of prophecy upon the subject; and that it is when nation shall cease to lift up its sword against nation; or, in other words, when one nation shall cease to move, for the purpose of attacking another, that military science will be no longer in demand, and that the people of the earth will learn the art of war no more. I should also have stated, that on this ground, I refrained from pronouncing on the justice or necessity

of any one war in which this country has ever been involved. I have no doubt that many of those who supported our former wars, looked on several of them as wars for existence; but on this matter I carefully abstain from the utterance of a single sentiment; for in so doing, I should feel myself to be descending from the generalities of christian principle, and employing that pulpit as the vehicle of a questionable policy, which ought never to be prostituted either to the unworthy object of sending forth the incense of human flattery to any one administration, or of regaling the factious, and turbulent, and disloyal passions of any party. I should next, if I had time, offer such observations as were suggested by my own views of political science, on the multitude of vulnerable points by which this country is surrounded, in the shape of numerous and distant dependencies, and which however much they may tend to foster the warlike politics of our government, are, in truth, so little worth the expense of a war, that should all of them be wrested away from us, they would leave the people of our empire as great, and as wealthy, and as competent to every purpose of home security as ever. Lastly, I might have whispered my inclination, for a little more of the Chinese policy being imported into Europe, not for the purpose of restraining a liberal intercourse between its different countries, but for the purpose of quieting in each its restless spirit of alarm, about every foreign movement in the politics and designs of other nations; because, sure I am, that were each great empire of the world to lay it down as the maxim of its most scrupulous observance, not to meddle till it was meddled with, each would feel in such a maxim both its safety and its triumph;—for such are the mighty resources of defensive war, that though the whole transportable force of Europe were to land upon our borders, the result of the experiment would be such,

that it should never be repeated—the rallying population of Britain could sweep them all from the face of its territory, and a whole myriad of invaders would melt away under the power of such a government as ours, trenched behind the loyalty of her defenders, and strong, as she deserves to be, in the love and in the confidence of all her children.

I would not have touched on any of the lessons of political economy, did they not lead me, by a single step, to a christian lesson, which I count it my incumbent duty to press upon the attention of you all. Any sudden change in the state of the demand, must throw the commercial world into a temporary derangement. And whether the change be from war to peace, or from peace to war, this effect is sure to accompany it. Now for upwards of twenty years, the direction of our trade has been accommodated to a war system, and when this system is put an end to, I do not say what amount of the distress will light upon this neighbourhood, but we may be sure that all the alarm of falling markets, and ruined speculation, will spread an impressive gloom over many of the manufacturing districts of the land. Now, let my title to address you on other grounds, be as questionable as it may, I feel no hesitation whatever in announcing it, as your most imperative duty, that no outcry of impatience or discontent from you, shall embarrass the pacific policy of his majesty's government. They have conferred a great blessing on the country, in conferring on it peace, and it is your part resignedly to weather the languid or disastrous months which may come along with it. The interest of trade is an old argument that has been set up in resistance to the dearest and most substantial interests of humanity. When Paul wanted to bring Christianity into Ephesus, he raised a storm of opposition around him, from a quarter which, I dare say, he was not counting on.

There happened to be some shrine manufactories in that place, and as the success of the Apostle would infallibly have reduced the demand for that article, forth came the decisive argument of, Sirs, by this craft we have our wealth, and should this Paul turn away the people from the worship of gods made with hands, thereby much damage would accrue to our trade. Why, my brethren, if this argument is to be admitted, there is not one conceivable benefit that can be offered for the acceptance of the species. Would it not be well if all the men of reading in the country were to be diverted from the poison which lurks in many a mischievous publication—and should this blessed reformation be effected, are there none to be found who would feel that much damage had accrued to their trade? Would it not be well, if those wretched sons of pleasure, before whom if they repent not, there lieth all the dreariness of an unprovided eternity—would it not be well, that they were reclaimed from the maddening intoxication which speeds them on in the career of disobedience —and on this event too, would there be none to complain that much damage had accrued to their trade? Is it not well, that the infamy of the slave trade has been swept from the page of British history? and yet do not many of you remember how long the measure lay suspended, and that about twenty annual flotillas burdened with the load of human wretchedness, were wafted across the Atlantic, while Parliament was deafened and overborne by unceasing clamours about the much damage that would accrue to the trade? And now, is it not well that peace has once more been given to the nations? and are you to follow up this goodly train of examples, by a single whisper of discontent about the much damage that will accrue to your trade? No, my brethren, I will not let down a single inch of the christian requirement that lies upon you. Should a sweeping tide of bankruptcy set in upon

the land, and reduce every individual who now hears me, to the very humblest condition in society, God stands pledged to give food and raiment to all who depend upon him;—and it is not fair to make others bleed, that you may roll in affluence;—it is not fair to desolate thousands of families, that yours may be upheld in luxury and splendour—and your best, and noblest, and kindest part is, to throw yourself on the promises of God, and he will hide you and your little ones in the secret of his pavilion till these calamities be overpast.

III. I trust it is evident from all that has been said, how it is only by the extension of christian principle among the people of the earth, that the atrocities of war will at length be swept away from it; and that each of us is hastening the commencement of that blissful period, who, in his own sphere, is doing all that in him lies to bring his own heart, and the hearts of others, under the supreme influence of this principle. It is public opinion, which, in the long run governs the world; and while I look with confidence to a gradual revolution in the state of public opinion from the omnipotence of gospel truth working its silent, but effectual way, through the families of mankind—yet I will not deny, that much may be done to accelerate the advent of perpetual and universal peace, by a distinct body of men embarking their every talent, and their every acquirement in the prosecution of this, as a distinct object. This was the way in which, a few years ago, the British public were gained over to the cause of Africa. This is the way in which some of the other prophecies of the Bible are at this moment hastening to their accomplishment; and it is in this way, I apprehend, that the prophecy of my text may be indebted for its speedier fulfilment to the agency of men selecting this as the assigned field on which their philanthropy shall expatiate. Were each individual member of such a scheme to pros-

ecute his own walk, and come forward with his own peculiar contribution, the fruit of the united labours of all would be one of the finest collections of christian eloquence, and of enlightened morals, and of sound political philosophy, that ever was presented to the world. I could not fasten on another cause more fitted to call forth such a variety of talent, and to rally around it so many of the generous and accomplished sons of humanity, and to give each of them a devotedness and a power far beyond whatever could be sent into the hearts of enthusiasts, by the mere impulse of literary ambition.

Let one take up the question of war in its principle, and make the fell weight of his moral severity rest upon it, and upon all its abominations. Let another take up the question of war in its consequences, and bring his every power of graphical description to the task of presenting an awakened public with an impressive detail of its cruelties and its horrors. Let another neutralize the poetry of war, and dismantle it of all those bewitching splendours, which the hand of misguided genius has thrown over it. Let another teach the world a truer, and more magnanimous path to national glory, than any country of the world has yet walked in. Let another tell with irresistible argument, how the christian ethics of a nation is at one with the christian ethics of its humblest individual. Let another bring all the resources of his political science to unfold the vast energies of defensive war, and show, that instead of that ceaseless jealousy and disquietude, which are ever keeping alive the flame of hostility among the nations, each may wait in prepared security, till the first footstep of an invader shall be the signal for mustering around the standard of its outraged rights, all the steel, and spirit, and patriotism of the country. Let another pour the light of modern speculation into the mysteries of trade, and prove that not

a single war has been undertaken for any of its objects, where the millions and the millions more which were lavished on the cause, have not all been cheated away from us by the phantom of an imaginary interest. This may look to many like the Utopianism of a romantic anticipation—but I shall never despair of the cause of truth addressed to a christian public, when the clear light of principle can be brought to every one of its positions, and when its practical and conclusive establishment forms one of the most distinct of Heaven's prophecies—"that men shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks—and that nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn the art of war any more."

THE DUTY OF GIVING AN IMMEDIATE DILIGENCE TO THE BUSINESS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

BEING AN

ADDRESS

TO THE

INHABITANTS

OF

THE PARISH OF KILMANY.

BY REV. THOMAS CHALMERS,

One of the ministers of Glasgow.

ADDRESS.

When one writes a letter to an intimate and a much loved friend, he never thinks of the graces of the composition. He unbosoms himself in a style of perfect freeness and simplicity. He gives way to the kindly affections of his heart, and though there may be many touches of tenderness in his performance, it is not because he aims at touches of any kind, but because all the tenderness that is written, is the genuine and the artless transcript of all the tenderness that is felt. Now conceive for a moment, that he wrote his letter under the consciousness that it was to be broadly exhibited before the eye of the public, this would immediately operate as a heavy restraint upon him. A man would much rather pour the expression of his friendship into the private ear of him who was the object of it, than he would do it under the full stare of a numerous company. And I, my brethren, could my time have allowed it, would much rather have written my earnest and longing aspiration for the welfare of you all by a private letter to each individual, than by this general Address, which necessarily exposes to the wide theatre of the public all that I feel, and all that I utter on the subject of my affectionate regard for you.

It were better then for the exercise to which I have now set myself, that I shut out all idea of the public; and

never, within the whole recollection of my life, was I less disposed to foster that idea. It may be observed, that the blow of some great and calamitous visitation brings a kind of insensibility along with it. I ought not to lament my withdrawment from you as a calamity, but it has had all the effect of a calamity upon me. I am removed from those objects which habitually interested my heart, and, for a time, it refuses to be interested in other objects. I am placed at a distance from that scene to which I was most alive, and I feel a deadness to every other scene. The people who are now around me, carry an unquestionable kindness in their bosoms, and vie with one another in the expression of it. I can easily perceive that there exists abundantly among them all the constituents of a highly interesting neighbourhood, and it may look cold and ungrateful in me that I am not interested. But it takes a time before the heart can attune itself to the varieties of a new situation. It is ever recurring to the more familiar scenes of other days. The present ministers no enjoyment, and in looking to the past the painful circumstance is, that while the fancy will not be kept from straying to that neighbourhood which exercises over it all the power of a much-loved home, the idea that it is home no longer comes with dread reality upon the mind, and turns the whole to bitterness.

With a heart thus occupied, I do not feel that the admission of the public into our conference will be any great restraint upon me. I shall speak to you as if they were not present, and I do not conceive that they can take a great interest in what I say, because I have no time for the full and explicit statement of principles. I have this advantage with you that I do not have with others, that with you I can afford to be less explicit. I presume upon your recollections of what I have, for some time, been in the habit of addressing to you, and flatter myself that you

may enter into a train of observation which to others may appear dark, and abrupt, and unconnected. In penning this short Address, I follow the impulse of my regard for you. You will receive it with indulgence, as a memorial from one who loves you; who is ever with you in heart, though not in person; who classes among the dearest of his recollections, the tranquil enjoyments he has had in your neighbourhood; who carries upon his memory the faithful image of its fields and of its families; and whose prayer for you all is, that you may so grow in the fruits of our common faith, as to be made meet for that unfading inheritance where sorrow and separation are alike unknown.

Were I to sit down for the purpose of drawing out a list of all the actions which may be called sinful, it would be long before I could complete the enumeration. Nay, I can conceive, that by adding one peculiarity after another, the variety may be so lengthened out as to make the attempt impossible. Lying, and stealing, and breaking the Sabbath, and speaking evil one of another, these are all so many sinful actions; but circumstances may be conceived which make one kind of lying different from another, and one kind of theft different from another, and one kind of evil speaking different from another, and in this way the number of sinful actions may be greatly swelled out; and should we attempt to take the amount, they may be like the host which no man could number, and every sinner, realizing one of these varieties, may wear his own peculiar complexion, and have a something about him, which marks him out, and signalizes him from all the other sinners by whom he is surrounded.

Yet, amid all this variety of visible aspect, there is one summary expression to which all sin may be reduced. There is one principle which, if it always existed in the heart, and were always acted upon in the life, would en-

tirely destroy the existence of sin, and the very essence of sin lies in the want of this one principle. Sin is a want of conformity to the will of God; and were a desire to do the will of God at all times the overruling principle of the heart and conduct, there would be no sin. It is this want of homage to him and to his authority, which gives to sin its essential character. The evil things coming out of the heart, which is the residence of this evil principle, may be exceedingly various, and may impart a very different complexion to different individuals. This complexion may be more or less displeasing to the outward eye. The evil speaker may look to us more hateful than the voluptuary, the man of cruelty than the man of profaneness, the breaker of his word than the breaker of the Sabbath. I believe it will generally be found, that the sin which inflicts the more visible and immediate harm upon men, is, in the eye of men the more hateful sin. There is a readiness to execrate falsehood, and calumny, and oppression; and along with this readiness there is an indulgence for the good-humoured failings of him who is the slave of luxury, and makes a god of his pleasure, and spends his days in all the thoughtlessness of one who walks in the counsel of his own heart, and in the sight of his own eyes, provided that his love of society leads him to share with others the enjoyment of all these gratifications, and his wealth enables him, and his moral honesty inclines him, to defray the expense of them.

Behold, then, one frequent source of delusion. He whose sins are less hateful to the world than those of others, wraps up himself in a kind of security. I wrong no man. I have a heart that can be moved by the impulses of compassion. I carry in my bosom a lively sentiment of indignation at the tale of perfidy or violence; and surely I may feel a satisfaction which others have no title to feel, who are guilty of that from which my nature recoils

with a generous abhorrence. He forgets all the while, that sin, in its essential character, may have as full and firm a possession of his heart, as of the man's with whom he is comparing himself; that there may be an entire disownal and forgetfulness of God; that not one particle of reverence, or of acknowledgment, may be given to the Being with whom he has to do; that whatever he may be in the eye of his neighbour, in the eye of him who seeth not as man seeth, he is guilty; that, walking just as he would have done though there had been no divine government whatever, he is a rebel to that government; and that amid all the complacency of his own feelings, and all the applause and good liking of his acquaintances, he wears all the deformity of rebelliousness in the eye of every spiritual being, who looks at the state of his heart, and passes judgment upon him by those very principles which are to try him at the great day when the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open.

If this were kept in view, it would lead to a more enlightened estimate of the character of man, than man in the thoughtlessness and unconcern of his natural state ever forms. It would lead us to see, that under all the hues and varieties of character, diversified as they are by constitutional taste, and the power of circumstances, there lurks one deep and universal disease, and that is the disease of a mind labouring under alienation from God, and without any practical sense of what is due to him. You will all admit it to be true, that the heart of a man may be under the full operation of this deadly poison, while the man himself has a constitutional taste for the pleasures of social intercourse. You see nothing unlikely or impossible in this combination. Now I want you to go along with me, when I carry my assertion still further; and sure I am that experience bears me out when I say, that the heart of a man may be under the full operation of

a dislike or indifference to God, while the man himself has a constitutional abhorrence at cruelty, a constitutional repugnance to fraud, a constitutional antipathy to what is uncourteous in manners, or harsh and unfeeling in conversation, a constitutional gentleness of character ; or, to sum up the whole in one clause, a man may be free from many things which give him a moral hatefulness in the eye of others, and he may have many things which throw a moral loveliness around him, and the soul be under the entire dominion of that carelessness about God, which gives to sin its essential character. And upon him, even upon him, graceful and engaging as he may be by the lustre of his many accomplishments, the saying of the Bible does not fail of being realised, that, "the heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked ; who can know it?"

And thus it is, that our great and ultimate aim in the reformation of a sinner, is the reformation of his heart. There may be many reformations short of this, and in which many are disposed to rest with deceitful complacency. I can conceive, that the man who formerly stole may steal no more, not because he is now sanctified, and feels the obligation of religious principle, but because he is now translated into better circumstances, and by the power of example, has contracted that tone of honourable feeling which exists among the upper classes of society. Here, then, is a reformation of the conduct, while the heart, in respect of that which constitutes its exceeding sinfulness, is no better than before. The old leaven of ungodliness may overspread its every desire, and its every affection ; and while the outer man has been washed of one of its visible deformities, the inner man may still persist in its unmindfulness of God ; and the pollution of this greatest and vilest of all moral turpitude, may adhere to it as obstinately as ever.

Now it appears to me, that these views, true in themselves, and deserving to be carried along with us through every inch of our religious progress, have often been practically misapplied. I can conceive an inquirer under the influence of these views, to fall into such a process of reflection as the following: 'If the outer conduct be of no estimation in the sight of God, unless it stand connected with the actings of a holy principle in the heart, let us begin with the heart, and from the establishment of a holy principle there, purity of conduct will follow as an effect of course. Let us beware of laying an early stress upon the doings of the outer man, lest we and others should have our eye turned from the reformation of the inner man, as the main and almost the exclusive object of a Christian's ambition. Let us be fearful how we urge such and such visible reformations, either upon ourselves or those around us, lest they be made to stand in the place of that grand renewing process, by which the soul, dead in trespasses and sins, is made alive unto God. Let us labour to impress the necessity of this process, and seeing the utter inability of man to change his own heart, let us turn his eye from any exertions of his own, to that fulness which is in Christ Jesus, through whom alone he can obtain the forgiveness of all his sins, and such a measure of power resting upon him, as carries along with it all the purifying influences of a spiritual reformation. In the mean time, let us take care how we speak about good works. Let the very mention of them put us into the defensive attitude of coldness and suspicion; and instead of giving our earnestness or our energy to them, let us press upon ourselves and others the exercises of that faith, by which alone we are made the workmanship of God, and created unto such good works as he hath ordained that we should walk in them.'

Now there is a great deal of truth throughout the

whole of this train of sentiment; but truth contemplated under such an aspect, and turned to such a purpose, as has the effect of putting an inquirer into a practical attitude, which appears to me to be unscriptural and wrong. I would not have him keep his hand for a single moment from the doing of that which is obviously right. I would not have him to refrain from grappling immediately with every one sin which is within the reach of his exertions. I would not have him to incur the delay of one instant in ceasing to do that which is evil; and I conceive that it is not till this is begun that he will learn to do that which is well. It ought not to restrain the energy of his immediate doing that he is told how doings are of no account, unless they are the doings of one who has gone through a previous regeneration. This ought not to keep him from doing. It should only lead him to combine with the prescribed doing, an earnest aspiring after a cleaner heart, and a better spirit than he yet finds himself to have. It is very true, that a man may do an outwardly good thing, and rest in what he has done. But it is as true, that a man may do the outwardly good thing he is bidden do, and, instead of resting, may look forward with diligent striving, and earnest, humble prayer, to some greater things than this. Now this last my brethren, is the attitude I want to put you into. Let the thief give up his stealing at this moment. Let the drunkard give up his intemperance. Let the evil speaker give up his calumnies. Let the doer of all that is obviously wrong, break off his sins, and turn him to the doing of all that is obviously right. Let no one thing, not even the speculations of orthodoxy,* be suf-

* Sorry should I be, if a term expressive of right notions on the most interesting of all subjects, were used by me with a levity at all calculated to beget an indifference to the soundness of your religious opinions, or to divert your most earnest attention from those inquiries, which have for their object the true will, and the true way of God for the salvation of men.

fered to stand a barrier against your entrance into the field of immediate exertion. I raise the very first blow of my trumpet against the visible iniquities which I see to be in you, and if there be any one obviously right thing you have hitherto neglected, I will not consume one particle of time before I call upon you to do it.

It is quite in vain to say that all this is not called for, or that I am now spending my strength and your time in combating an error which has no practical existence. You must be quite familiarised with the melancholy spectacle of a zealous professor mourning over the sinfulness of his heart, and, at the same time putting forth his hand, without one sigh of remorse, to what is sinful in ordinary conduct. Have you never witnessed one, who could speak evil of his neighbour, and was at the same time trenched among what he thought the speculations of orthodoxy, and made the utter corruption of the soul of man one of these speculations? Is it not enough to say that he is a mere speculative Christian? for the very same thing may be detected in the practice of one who feels a real longing to be delivered from the power of that sin, which he grieves has such an entire dominion over him. And yet, strange to tell, there is many an obvious and every-day sin, which is not watched against, which is not struggled against, and the commission of which gives no uneasiness whatever. The man is as it were so much occupied with the sinfulness of his heart, that he neither feels nor attends to the sinfulness of his conduct. He wants to go methodically to work. He wants to begin at the beginning, and he forms his estimate of what the beginning is upon the arrangements of human speculations. It sounds very plausibly, that as out of the heart are the issues of life, the work of an inquiring Christian must begin there; but the mischief I complain of is, that in the first prosecution of this work, months or years may be

consumed ere the purified fountain send forth its streams, or the repentance he is aspiring after tell on the plain and palpable doings of his ordinary conduct. Hence, my brethren, the mortifying exhibition of great zeal, and much talk, and diligent canvassing and conversing about the abstract principles of the christian faith, combined with what is visible in the christian practice, being at a dead stand, and not one inch of sensible progress being made in any one thing which the eye can witness, or the hand can lay a tangible hold upon. The man is otherwise employed. He is busy with the first principles of the subject. He still goes on with his wonted peevishness within doors, and his wonted dishonesties without doors. He has not yet come to these matters. He is taken up with laying and labouring at the foundation. The heart is the great subject of his anxiety; and in the busy exercise of mourning, and confessing, and praying, and studying the right management of his heart, he may take up months or years before he come to the deformities of his outward and ordinary conduct. I will venture to go farther, my brethren, and assert, that if this be the track he is on, it will be a great chance if he ever come to them at all. To the end of his days he may be a talking, and inquiring, and speculating, and I doubt not along with all this, a church-going and ordinance-loving christian. But I am much afraid that he is, practically speaking, not in the way to the solid attainments of a Christian, whose light shines before men. All that meets the eye of daily observers may have undergone no change whatever, and the life of the poor man may be nothing better than the dream of a delusive and bewildering speculation.

Now, it is very true that, agreeably to the remarks with which I prefaced this argument, the great and ultimate aim of all reformation is to reform the heart, and to bring it into such a state of principle and desire, that God

may be glorified in soul and in spirit as well as in body. This is the point that is ever to be sought after, and ever to be pressed forward to. Under a sense of his deficiencies from this point, a true Christian will read diligently that he may learn the gospel method of arriving at it. He will pray diligently that the clean heart may be created, and the right spirit may be renewed within him. The earnestness of his attention to this matter will shut him up more and more into the faith of that perfect sacrifice, which his short-comings from a holy and heart-searching law will ever remind him of, as the firm and the only ground of his acceptance with God. The same honest reliance on the divine testimony, which leads him to close with the doctrine of the atonement, and to rejoice in it, will also lead him to close with the doctrine of sanctification, and diligently to aspire after it. Now, in the business of so aspiring after this object, it is not enough that he read diligently in the Word; it is not enough that he pray diligently for the Spirit. These are two ingredients in the business of seeking after his object, but they are not the only ones; and what I lament is, that a fear about the entireness of his orthodoxy leads many a zealous inquirer to look coldly and askance at another ingredient in this business. He should not only read diligently and pray diligently, but he should do diligently every one right thing that is within his reach, and that he finds himself to have strength for. Any one author who talks of the insignificance of doings, in such a way as practically to restrain an inquirer from vigorously and immediately entering upon the performance of them, misleads that inquirer from the scriptural method, by which we are directed to a greater measure of light and of holiness than we are yet in possession of. He detaches one essential ingredient from the business of seeking. He may set the spirit of his reader a roaming over some field of airy

speculation; but he works no such salutary effect upon his spirit, as evinces itself by any one visible or substantial reformation. I have often and often attempted to press this lesson upon you, my brethren; and I bear you testimony, that, while a resistance to practical preaching has been imputed to the zealous professors of orthodoxy, you listened with patience, and I trust not without fruit, when addressing you as if you had just begun to stir yourselves in the matter of your salvation. I ranked it among my preliminary instructions, that you should cease from the evil of your doings; that you should give up all that you know to be wrong in your ordinary conduct; that the thief should restrain himself from stealing, the liar from falsehood, the evil speaker from backbiting, the slothful labourer in the field from eye-service, the faithless house maid in the family from all purloining and all idleness.

The subterfuges of hypocrisy are endless; and if it can find one in a system of theology, it will be as glad of it from that quarter as from any other. Some there are who deafen the impression of all these direct and immediate admonitions, by saying that before all these doings are insisted on, we must lay well and labour well at the foundation of faith in Christ, without whom we can do nothing. The truth, that without Christ we can do nothing, is unquestionable; but it would take many a paragraph to expose its want of application to the use that is thus made of it. But to cut short this plea of indolence for delaying the painful work of surrendering all that is vicious in conduct; let me put it to your common sense whether a thief would not, and could not give up stealing for a week, if he had the reward of a fortune waiting him at the end of it; whether, upon the same reward, an evil speaker could not, for the same time, impose a restraint upon his lips, and the slothful servant become a most pains-taking and diligent worker, and the

liar maintain an undeviating truth throughout all his conversations. Each of these would find himself to have strength for these things, were the inducement of a certain temporal reward held out, or the dread of a certain temporal punishment were made to hang over him. Now, for the temporal punishment, I substitute the call of, "Flee from the coming wrath." Let this call have the effect it should have, and the effect it actually does have, on many who are not warped by a misleading speculation, and it will make them stir up such strength as they possess, and give up, in deed, much of their actual misconduct. This effect it had in the days of John the Baptist. People on his call, gave up their violence and their extortions, and the evil of many of their doings, and were thus put into what God in his wisdom counted a fit state of preparation for the Saviour. If there was any thing in the revelation of the Gospel calculated to supersede this call of, "Cease you from the evil of your doings," then I could understand the indifference, or the positive hostility, of zealous pretenders to the work of addressing practical exhortation to inquirers at the very outset of their progress. But so far from being superseded by any thing that the Gospel lays before us, the Author and the first preachers of the Gospel just took up the lesson of John, and at the very commencement of their ministry did they urge it upon people to turn them from the evil of their doings. Repent and believe the Gospel, says our Saviour. Repent and turn unto God, and do works meet for repentance, says the apostle Paul. And there must be something wrong, my brethren, if you resist me urging it upon you, to give up at this moment, even though it should be the first moment of your concern about salvation, to give up all that is obviously wrong; to turn you to all that is obviously right; to grapple with every sin you can lay your hand upon; and if it be true.

in point of experience and common sense, that many a misdeed may be put away from you on the allurement of some temporal reward; then if you have faith in the reality of eternal things, the hope of an escape from the coming wrath may and will tell immediately upon you, and we shall see among you a stir, and a diligence, and a doing, and a visible reformation.

It is a great matter to chase away all mysticism from the path by which a sinner is led unto God; and it is to be lamented that many a speculation of many a respected divine, has the effect of throwing a darkening cloud of perplexity over the very entrance of this path. I tell you a very plain thing, and, if it be true, it is surely of importance that you should know it, when I tell you, that if you are a servant, and are visited with a desire after salvation, then a faithful performance of your daily task is a step without which the object you aim at is unattainable. If you are a son, a more punctual fulfilment of your parent's bidding is another step. If you are a neighbour, a more civil and obliging deportment to those around you is another step. If you are a dealer, the adoption of a just weight and a just measure is another step. There are some who, afraid of your attempting to get acceptance with God by the merit of your own doings, would not venture to urge all this at the outset, lest they should lead you to rest on a delusive ground of confidence. They would try to get a perfect and a clear understanding of the right ground of acceptance established, *previous* to the use of any such urgency; and then, upon this principle being well laid within you, they might take the liberty of telling you your duty. Their fearfulness upon this point forms a very striking contrast to the free, and unembarrassed, and energetic manner, in which the Bible, both of the Old and New Testament, calls on every man who comes within the reach of a hearing, to

cease from all sin, and turn him to all righteousness. In following its example, let us be fearless of all consequences. It may not suit the artificial processes of some of our systems, nor fall in with the order of their well-weighed and carefully arranged articles, to tell at the very outset of those obvious reformations which I am now pressing upon you. But sure I am that an apostle would have felt no difficulty on the subject; nor whatever the visible sin which deformed you, or whatever the visible act of obedience in which you were deficient, would he have been restrained from giving his immediate energy to the work of calling on you to abstain from the one and to do the other.

The disciples of John could not have such a clear view of the ground of acceptance before God, as an enlightened disciple of the apostles. Yet the want of this clear view did not prevent them from being right subjects for John's preparatory instructions. And what were these instructions? Soldiers were called on to give up their violence, and publicans their exactions, and rich men the confinement of their own wealth to their own gratification; and will any man hesitate for a moment to decide, whether those who turned away from the directions of the forerunner, or those who followed them, were in the likeliest state for receiving light and improvement from the subsequent teaching of the Saviour?

But there is one difference between them and us. The whole of Christ's teaching, as put down in the word of God, is already before us. Now what precise effect should this have upon the nature of an initiatory address to sinners? The right answer to this question will confirm, or it will demolish the whole of our preceding argument. The alone ground of acceptance, is the righteousness of Christ imputed to all who believe. This truth deserves to be taken up, and urged immediate-

ly in the hearing of all who are within the reach of the preacher's voice. Till this truth be received, there should be no rest to the sinner, there is no reconciliation with God, nor will he attain that consummation of holiness, without which there can be no meetness for the enjoyment of heaven. But some are readier to receive this truth than others. The reforming publicans and harlots of John were in a state of greater readiness to receive this truth, than either the Pharisees, or those publicans and harlots who, unmindful of John, still persisted in their iniquities. And who will be in greater readiness to receive this truth in the present day? Will it be the obstinate and determinate doers of all that is sinful, and that too in the face of a call, that they should do works meet for repentance? Or will it be those who, under the influence of this call, do what the disciples of John did before them, turn them from the evil of their manifest iniquities, and so give proof of their earnestness in the way of salvation? It is true that, along with such a call, we might now urge a truth which even John could not. But are we to suspend the call of doing works meet for repentance, till this truth be urged and established in the mind of the hearer? Surely if God thought it wise to ply sinners with a call to turn them from the evil of their ways, *before* he fully revealed to them the evangelical ground of their acceptance, we may count it scriptural and safe to ply them with this call *at the same time*, that we state to them the evangelical ground of their acceptance. It is true, that the statement may not be comprehended all at once. It may be years before it is listened to by the careless, before it is rested in by the desponding, before the comfort of it is at all felt or appropriated by the doubting and melancholy inquirer. Now what I contend for is, that during this interval of time, these people may and ought to be urged with the call of de-

parting from their inquities. This very call was brought to bear on the disciples of John, before the ground of their acceptance was fully made known to them; and it might be brought to bear on sinners now, even though it should be before the ground of their acceptance be fully understood by them. The effect of this preparatory instruction in these days, was to fit John's disciples for the subsequent revelation of Christ and his apostles. It is true, that we are in possession of that doctrine which they only had the prospect of. But it accords with experience, that this doctrine might be addressed without effect for years to men inquiring after salvation. The doctrine of justification by the righteousness of Christ, might be announced in all its force, and in all its simplicity, to men who hold out against it; and you would surely say of them, that the way of the Lord had not been prepared to their minds, nor his paths made straight. Now we read of such a preparation set a going in behalf of men to whom this doctrine had not yet been revealed. Will this preparation be altogether ineffectual in behalf of men, by whom this doctrine is not yet understood? Surely it is quite evident, that in the days of John, men who, in obedience to his call, were struggling with their sins, were in a likelier way for receiving those larger measures of truth, which were afterward revealed, than they who, in the face of that call, were obstinately and presumptuously retaining them. Suffer us to avail ourselves of the same advantage now. You, my brethren, who, in obedience to the calls that have been sounded in your hearing, are struggling with your sins, are in a liklier way for receiving those larger measures of truth which are now revealed, than those of you who feel no earnestness, and are making no endeavours upon the subject. While, therefore, I announce to you, in the most distinct terms, that you will not be saved

unless you are found in the righteousness of Christ, this will not restrain me at the very same time from doing what John did. You know how his disciples were prepared for the baptism of the Holy Ghost, who guides unto all truth; and while I do not think that any one point of time is too early for offering Christ to you, in all the benefits of his sacrifice, in all the imputed merits of his perfect righteousness, in all the privileges which he has proclaimed and purchased for believers; all I contend for is, that neither is there any point of time too early for letting you know, that all sin must be abandoned, for calling on you to enter into the work of struggling with all sin immediately, for warning you, that while you persist in those sinful actions which you might give up, and would give up, were a temporal inducement held out to you, I have no evidence of your receiving benefit from the word of salvation that I am sounding in your ears. There is surely room for telling sinners more than one thing, in the course of the very earliest lesson that is laid before them. It is an exclusive deference to the one point, and the one principle, and the bringing of every thing else into a forced subordination upon it, which has enfeebled many an attempt to turn sinners to Christ from their iniquities. I can surely tell a man, that unless he is walking in a particular line, he will not reach the object he is aiming at; and I can tell him at the same time, that neither will he reach it, unless he have his eyes open, and he look upon the object. On these two unquestionable truths, I bid him both walk and look at the same time, and at the same time he can do both. In the same manner I may tell a man, that unless he give up stealing, he shall not reach heaven; and I may also tell him, that unless he accept, by faith, Christ as his alone Saviour, he shall not reach heaven. On these two truths I found two practical directions; and I must be convinced, that

the doing of the one hinders the doing of the other, ere I desist from that which the first teachers of Christianity did before me,—proclaim Christ, and within the compass of the same breathing, call on men to do works meet for repentance.

In the order of time, the practical instructions of John went before the full announcement of the doctrines of salvation. I do not think, however, that this order is authoritative upon us; but far less do I think that our full possession of the doctrine of salvation confers any authority upon us for reversing the historical process of the New Testament. I bring all the truths which the teachers of these days addressed to the sinners among whom they labour, to bear immediately upon you sinners now. And while I call upon you to turn from the evil of your ways, I also warn you of the danger of putting away from you the offered Saviour, or refusing all your confidence in that name than which there is no other given under heaven whereby men can be saved.

If by faith be meant the embracing of one doctrine, then I can understand how some might be alarmed lest an outset so practical should depose faith from the precedency which belongs to it. But if by faith be meant a reliance on the whole testimony of Scripture, then the precedency of faith is not at all broken in upon. If, on the call of "Flee from the coming wrath," I get you to struggle it with your more palpable iniquities, I see in that very struggle the operation of a faith in the divine testimony about the realities of an invisible world, and I have reason to bless God that he has wrought in you what I am sure no argument and no vehemence of mine could, without the power of his Spirit, ever have accomplished. Those of you who have thus evinced one exercise of faith, I look upon as more hopeful subjects for another exercise, than those of you who remain trenched

in obstinacy and unconcern. And when I tell the former, that nothing will get them acceptance with God, but the mediation of Christ offered to all who come, it will be to them, and not to the latter, that I shall look for an earnest desire after the offered Saviour. When I tell them that they affront God by not receiving the record which he gives of his Son, it will be to them and not to the others, that I shall look for a submissive and thankful acquiescence in the whole of his salvation ; and thus passing with the docility of little children from one lesson of the Bible to another ; these are the people who, working because God so bids them, will count that a man is not justified by the works of the law, because God so tells them ; these are the people who, not offended by what Christ told them at the outset, that he who cometh unto him must forsake all, will evince their willingness to forsake all, by turning from their iniquities, and coming unto Christ; these are the people who, while they do what they may with their hands, will think that while their heart is not directed to the love of God, they have done nothing ; and counting it a faithful saying, that without Christ they can do nothing, they will take to him as their sanctifier as well as their Saviour, and having received him as the Lord their righteousness, will ever repair to him and keep by him as the Lord their strength.

While I urge upon you the doing of every obviously right thing, you will not conceive of me that I want you to rest in this doing. I trust that my introductory paragraphs may convince you how much of this doing may be gone through, and yet the mighty object of the obedience of the willing heart might be unreached and unaccomplished. Not to urge the doing, lest you should rest, would be to deviate from scriptural example. And again, to urge the doing, and leave you to rest, would be also to deviate from scriptural example. John the Baptist urged

the doing of many things, and his faithful disciples set themselves to the performance of what he bade them do. They entered immediately on the field of active and diligent service. But did they stop short? No; out of the very preaching of their master did they obtain a caution against resting; and the same submissive deference to his authority, in virtue of which they were set a working, led them also, along with their working at the things which he set them to, to look forward to greater things than these. He told them expressly, that all his preaching was as nothing to the preaching of one who was to come after him. They were diligent with present things, but be assured that they combined with this diligence the attitude of looking forward to greater things. Is this the attitude of men who place their repose and their dependance upon the performances on hand? Was it not the atittude of men walking in the way revealed by a messenger from heaven, to the object which this messenger pointed out to them. I call on you to commence at this moment an immediate struggle with all sin, and an immediate striving after all righteousness; but I would not be completing even the lesson of John, and far less would I be bringing forward the counsel of God as made known to us in his subsequent revelation, were I to say any thing which led you to stop short at those visible reformations, which formed the great burden of John's practical addresses to his countrymen; and therefore along with your doing, and most diligently doing all that is within your reach, I call on you to pray, and most fervently and faithfully to pray for that larger baptism of the Holy Ghost, by which your hearts may be cleansed from all their corruptions, and you be enabled to render unto God all the purity of a spiritual obedience.

I cannot expatiate within the limits of this short Address on the texts both of the Old and New Testament.

which serve to establish, that the right attitude of a returning sinner is what I have sometimes called in your hearing, the compound attitude of service and expectation. But I shall repeat a few of these texts, that they may suggest what you have been in the habit of hearing from me upon this subject. "And Samuel spake to all the house of Israel saying, if ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines. Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the Lord only." "They will not frame their doings to turn unto the Lord, "Thus saith the Lord, keep ye judgment and do justice, for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed. Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it, that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil." "Deal thy bread to the hungry, and bring the poor that are cast out into thy house. When thou seest the naked, cover him, and hide not thyself from thine own flesh. Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily, and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward." "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him." "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath." "Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be call-

ed great in the kingdom of heaven." "And we are witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him." "Trust in the Lord and do good."

But danger presses on us in every direction; and in the work of dividing the word of truth, many, and very many, are the obstacles which lie in the way of our doing it rightly. When a Minister gives his strength to one particular lesson, it often carries in it the appearance of his neglecting all the rest, and throwing into the back ground other lessons of equal importance. It might require the ministrations of many years to do away this appearance. Sure I am, that I despair of doing it away within the limits of this short Address to any but yourselves. You know all that I have urged upon the ground of your acceptance with God; upon the freeness of that offer which is by Christ Jesus; upon the honest invitations which every where abound in the Gospel, that all who will may take hold of it; upon the necessity of being found by God not in your own righteousness, but in the righteousness which is of Christ; upon the helplessness of man, and how all the strugglings of his own unaided strength can never carry him to the length of a spiritual obedience; upon the darkness and enmity of his mind about the things of God, and how this can never be dissolved, till he who by nature stands afar off is brought near by the blood of the atonement, and he receives that repentance and that remission of sins, which Christ is exalted a Prince and a Saviour to dispense to all who believe in him. These are offers and doctrines which might be addressed, and ought to be addressed *immediately* to all. But the call I have been urging upon you through the whole of this pamphlet, of "Cease ye from your manifest transgressions," should be addressed along with them. Now here lies the difficulty with many a sincere

lover of the truth as it is in Jesus. He feels a backwardness in urging this call, lest it should somehow or other impair the freeness of the offer, or encroach upon the singleness of that which is stated to be our alone meritorious ground of acceptance before God. In reply to this, let it be well observed, that though the offer be at all times free, it is not at all times listened to; and though the only ground of acceptance be that righteousness of Christ which is unto all them and upon all them that believe, yet some are in likelier circumstances for being brought to this belief than others. There is one class of hearers who are in a greater state of readiness for being impressed by the Gospel than another,—and I fear that all the use has not been made of this principle which Scripture and experience warrant us to do. Every attempt to work man into a readiness for receiving the offer has been discouraged, as if it carried in it a reflection against the freeness of the offer itself. The obedient disciples of John were more prepared for the doctrines of grace, than the careless hearers of this prophet; but their obedience did not confer any claim of merit upon them, it only made them more disposed to receive the good tidings of that salvation which was altogether of grace. A despiser of ordinances is put into a likelier situation for receiving the free offer of the Gospel, by being prevailed upon to attend a church where this offer is urged upon his acceptance. His attendance does not impair the freeness of the offer. Yet where is the man so warped by a misleading speculation, as to deny that the doing of this previous to his union with Christ, and preparatory to that union, may be the very mean of the free offer being received. Again, it is the lesson both of experience and of the Bible, that the young are likelier subjects for religious instruction than the old. The free offer may and ought to be addressed to both these classes; but generally speaking, it is in point of fact more productive of good when addressed to

the first class than the second. And we do not say that youth confers any meritorious title to salvation, nor do we make any reflection on the freeness of the offer, when we urge it upon the young, lest they should get old, and it have less chance of being laid before them with acceptance. We make no reflection upon the offer as to its character of freeness, but we proceed upon the obvious fact, that, free as it is, it is not so readily listened to or laid hold of by the second class of hearers as by the first. And, lastly, when addressing sinners now, all of them might and ought to be plied with the free offer of salvation at the very outset. But if it be true, that those of them who wilfully persist in those misdoings, which they could give up on the inducement of a temporal reward, will not, in point of fact, be so impressed by the offer, or be so disposed to accept of it, as those who (on the call of—"Flee from the coming wrath;" and on being told, that unless they repent they shall perish; and on being made to know, what our Saviour made inquirers know at the very starting point of their progress as his disciples, that he who followeth after him must forsake all,) have begun to break off their sins, and to put the evil of their doings away from them: then we are not stripping the offer of its attribute of perfect freeness, but we are only doing what God in his wisdom did two thousand years ago; we are, under Him, preparing souls for the reception of this offer, when, along with the business of proposing it, which we cannot do too early, we bring the urgency of an immediate call to bear on the children of iniquity, that they should cease to do evil, and learn to do well.

The publicans and harlots entered into the kingdom of God before the Pharisees, and yet the latter were free from the outward transgressions of the former. Now, the fear which restrains many from lifting the immediate

call of,—"Cease ye from your transgressions," is, lest it should put those who obey the call into the state of Pharisees; and there is a secret, though not avowed, impression in their minds, that it were better for their hearers to remain in the state of publicans and harlots, and in this state to have the offer of Christ and all his benefits set before them. But mark well, that it was not the publicans and harlots who persisted in their iniquities, but they who counted John to be a prophet, and in obedience to his call were putting their iniquities away from them, who had the advantage of the Pharisees. None will surely say, that those of them who continued as they were, were put into a state of preparation for the Saviour by the preaching of John. Some will be afraid to say, that those of them who gave up their iniquities at the bidding of John were put into a state of preparation, lest it should encourage a pharisaical confidence in our own doings. But mark the distinction between these and the Pharisees: The Pharisees might be as free as the reforming publicans and harlots, of those visible transgressions which characterized them; but on this they rested their confidence, and put the offered Saviour away from them. The publicans and harlots, so far from resting their confidence on the degree of reformation which they had accomplished, were prompted to this reformation by the hope of the coming Saviour. They connected with all their doings the expectation of greater things. They waited for the kingdom of God that was at hand; and the preaching of John, under the influence of which they had put away from them many of their misdeeds, could never lead them to stop short at this degree of amendment, when the very same John told them of one who was to come after him, in comparison of whom he and all his sermons were as nothing. The Saviour did come, and he said of those publicans and harlots who believed and repented at the

preaching of John, that they entered the kingdom of heaven before the Pharisees. They had not earned that kingdom by their doings, but they were in a fitter and readier state for receiving the tidings of it. The gospel came to them on the footing of a free and unmerited offer; and on this footing it should be proposed to all. But it is not on this footing that it will be accepted by all. Not by men who, free from many glaring and visible iniquities, rest on the decency of their own character;—not by men who, deformed by these iniquities, still wilfully and obstinately persist in them; but by men who, earnest in their inquiries after salvation, and who, made to know, as they ought to be at the very outset of their inquiries, that it is a salvation from sin as well as from punishment, have given up the practice of their outward iniquities, as the first fruit and evidence of their earnestness.

Let me, therefore, in addition to the lesson I have already urged upon you, warn you against a pharisaical confidence in your own doings. While, on the one hand, I tell you that none are truly seeking who have not begun to do; I, on the other hand, tell you, that none have truly found who have not taken up with Christ as the end of the law for righteousness. Let Jesus Christ, the same to-day, yesterday, and forever, be the end of your conversation. Never take rest till you have found it in him. You never will have a well-grounded comfort in your intercourse with God, till you have learned the way of going to the throne of his grace in fellowship with Christ as your appointed Mediator;—you never will rejoice in hope of the coming glory, till your peace be made with God through Jesus Christ our Lord;—you never will be sure of pardon, till you rest in the forgiveness of your sins as coming to you through the redemption which is in his blood. And what is more, addressing you as people who have received a practical impulse to the obedience of

the commandments, never forget, that, while the reformation of your first and earliest stages in the Christian life went no farther than to the amendment of your more obvious and visible deficiencies, this reformation, to be completed, must bring the soul and spirit, as well as the body, under a subserviency to the glory of God; and it never can be completed but by the shedding abroad of that Spirit which is daily poured on the daily prayers of believers: and I call upon you always to look up to God through the channel of Christ's appointed mediatorship, that you may receive through this same channel a constant and ever increasing supply of the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

I call upon you to be up and doing; but I call upon you with the very same breath, not to rest satisfied with any dark, or doubtful, or confused notions about your way of acceptance with God; and let it be your earnest and never-ceasing object to be found in that way. While you have the commandments and keep them, look at the same time for the promised manifestations. To be indifferent whether you have a clear understanding of the righteousness of Christ, is the same as thinking it not worth your while to inquire into that which God thought it worth his while to give up his Son unto the death that he might accomplish. It is to affront God, by letting him speak while you refuse to listen or attend to him. Have a care, lest it be an insulting sentiment on your part, as to the worth of your polluted services, and that, sinful as they are, and defective as they are, they are good enough for God. Lean not on such a bruised reed; but let Christ, in all the perfection of that righteousness, which is unto all them and upon all them that believe, be the alone rock of your confidence. Your feet will never get on a sure place till they be established on that foundation than which there is no other; and to delay a single moment in your

attempts to reach it, and to find rest upon it, after it is so broadly announced to you, is to incur the aggravated guilt of those who neglect the great salvation, and who make God a liar, by suspending their belief of that record which he hath given of his Son,—"And this is the record that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."

Again I call upon you to be up and doing; and I call upon you to accept of Christ as your alone Saviour: but I call upon you, at the same time, to look to the whole extent of his salvation. "You hath he quickened, having forgiven you all trespasses." There is the forgiveness of all that has been dead, and sinful, and alienated within you; but there is also a quickening, and a reforming, and a putting within you a near and a lively sense of God, so as that you may henceforth serve him with newness of heart, and walk before him in all newness of life and of conversation. Your hearts will be enlarged, so as that you may run the way of all the commandments. O how it puts to flight all pharisaical confidence in the present exercises of obedience, when one casts an enlightened eye over the whole extent of the Christian race, and thinks of the mighty extent of those attainments which were exemplified by the disciples of the New Testament! The service which I now yield, and is perhaps offered up in the spirit of bondage, must be offered up in the spirit of adoption. It must be the obedience of a child, who yields the willing homage of his affections to his reconciled father. It must be the obedience of the heart; and O how far is a slavish performance of the bidden task, from the consent of the inner man to the law of that God whom he delights to honour! This love to him, and delight in him, occupy the foremost place in the list of the bidden requirements. If I love the creature more than the Creator, I trample on the authority of the first and greatest of the commandments; and what an imposing exhibition

of sobriety, and justice, and almsgiving, and religious decency, may be presented in the character and doings of him whose conversation is not in heaven, who minds earthly things, who loves his wealth more than God, who likes his ease and comfort on this side of time more than all his prospects on the other side of it, and who, therefore, though he may never have looked upon himself to be any thing else than a fair Christian, is looked upon by every spiritual being as a rebel to his God, with the principle of rebellion firmly seated in his most vital part, even in his heart turned in coldness and alienation away from him.

But if God be looked upon by you as a Father with whom you are reconciled through the blood of sprinkling, it will not be so with you. Now, this is what he calls you to do. He gives you a warrant to choose him as your God. He offers himself to your acceptance, and beseeches all to whom the word of salvation is sent, to be reconciled to Him. It is indeed a wonderful change in the state of a heart, when, giving up its coldness and indifference to God, (and I call upon every careless and unawakened man to tell me, upon his honesty, whether this be not the actual state of his heart,) it surrenders itself to him with the warm and the willing tribute of all its affections. Now, there is not one power, within the compass of nature, that can bring about this change. It does not lie with man to give up the radical iniquity of an alienated heart; the Ethiopian may as soon change his skin, and the leopard his spots. But what cannot be done by him is done to him, when he accepts of the Gospel. The promises of Christ are abundantly performed upon all who trust in him. Through him is the dispensation of forgiveness, and with him is the dispensation of the all-powerful and all-subduing Spirit. While, then, with the very first mention of his name, I call on you to

cease your hand from doing evil, surely there is nothing in the call that can lead you to stop at any one point of obedience, when I, at the same time, tell you of the mighty change that must be accomplished, ere you are meet for the inheritance of the saints. You must be made the workmanship of God; you must be born again; you must be made to feel your dependance on the power of the renewing Spirit; and that power must come down upon you, and keep by you, and by his ever-needed supplies must form the habitual answer to your habitual and believing prayers.

I have now got upon ground on which many will refuse to go along with me. I can get their testimony to the spectacle of a reforming people, putting the visible iniquities of stealing, and lying, and evil speaking, and drunkenness, away from them; but from the moment we come to the only principle which confers any value on these visible expressions, even the willing homage of the heart to God, and to his law in all its spirituality and extent; and from the moment that we come to the only expedient by which such a principle can ever obtain an establishment within us, (and we challenge them to attempt the establishment of this principle in any other way,) even the operation of that spirit which is given to those who accept of Christ as he is laid before us in the Gospel; then, and at that moment, are we looked upon as having entered within the borders of fanaticism; and, while they lavish their superficial admiration on the flowers of virtue, do they refuse the patience of their attention to the root from which they spring, or to the nourishment which maintains them.

And here I cannot but record the effect of an actual though undesigned experiment, which I prosecuted for upwards of twelve years among you. For the greater part of that time, I could expatiate on the meanness of

dishonesty, on the villany of falsehood, on the despicable arts of calumny,—in a word, upon all those deformities of character, which awaken the natural indignation of the human heart against the pests and the disturbers of human society. Now could I, upon the strength of these warm expostulations, have got the thief to give up his stealing, and the evil speaker his censoriousness, and the liar his deviations from truth, I should have felt all the repose of one who had gotten his ultimate object. It never occurred to me that all this might have been done, and yet every soul of every hearer have remained in full alienation from God; and that even could I have established in the bosom of one who stole, such a principle of abhorrence at the meanness of dishonesty, that he was prevailed upon to steal no more, he might still have retained a heart as completely unturned to God, and as totally unpossessed by a principle of love to Him, as before. In a word, though I might have made him a more upright and honourable man, I might have left him as destitute of the essence of religious principle as ever. But the interesting fact is, that during the whole of that period in which I made no attempt against the natural enmity of the mind to God, while I was inattentive to the way in which this enmity is dissolved, even by the free offer on the one hand, and the believing acceptance on the other, of the gospel salvation; while Christ, through whose blood the sinner, who by nature stands afar off, is brought near to the heavenly Lawgiver whom he has offended, was scarcely ever spoken of, or spoken of in such a way, as stripped him of all the importance of his character and his offices, even at this time I certainly did press the reformations of honour, and truth, and integrity among my people; but I never once heard of any such reformations having been effected among them. If there was any thing at all brought about in this way, it was more than ever I got any account of. I am

not sensible, that all the vehemence with which I urged the virtues and the proprieties of social life, had the weight of a feather on the moral habits of my parishioners. And it was not till I got impressed by the utter alienation of the heart in all its desires and affections from God; it was not till reconciliation to Him became the distinct and the prominent object of my ministerial exertions; it was not till I took the scriptural way of laying the method of reconciliation before them; it was not till the free offer of forgiveness through the blood of Christ was urged upon their acceptance, and the Holy Spirit given through the channel of Christ's mediatorship to all who ask him was set before them as the unceasing object of their dependance and their prayers; it was not, in one word, till the contemplations of my people were turned to these great and essential elements in the business of a soul providing for its interest with God and the concerns of its eternity, that I ever heard of any of those subordinate reformations which I aforetime made the earnest and the zealous, but I am afraid at the same time, the ultimate object of my earlier ministrations. Ye servants, whose scrupulous fidelity has now attracted the notice, and drawn forth in my hearing a delightful testimony from your masters, what mischief you would have done, had your zeal for doctrines and sacraments been accompanied by the sloth and the remissness, and what, in the prevailing tone of moral relaxation, is counted the allowable purloining of your earlier days! But a sense of your heavenly Master's eye has brought another influence to bear upon you; and while you are thus striving to adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things, you may, poor as you are, reclaim the great ones of the land to the acknowledgment of the faith. You have at least taught me, that to preach Christ is the only effective way of preaching morality in all its branches; and out of your humble cottages have

I gathered a lesson, which I pray God I may be enabled to carry with all its simplicity into a wider theatre, and to bring with all the power of its subduing efficacy upon the vices of a more crowded population.

And here it gives me pleasure to observe, that, earnest as I have been for a plain and practical outset, the very first obedience of John's disciples was connected with a belief in the announcement of a common Saviour. This principle was present with them, and had its influence on the earliest movements of their repentance. Faith in Christ had at that time but an obscure dawning in their minds ; but they did not wait for its full and its finished splendour, till they should begin the work of keeping the commandments. To this infant faith there corresponded a certain degree of obedience, and this obedience grew more enlightened, more spiritual, more allied with the purity of the heart, and the movements of the inner man, just as faith obtained its brighter and larger accessions in the course of the subsequent revelations. The disciple of John keeping himself free from extortion and adultery, was a very different man from the Pharisee, who was neither an extortioner nor an adulterer. The mind of the Pharisee rested on his present performances ; the mind of the disciple was filled with the expectation of a higher Teacher, and he looked forward to him, and was in the attitude of readiness to listen, and believe, and obey. Many of them were transferred from the forerunner to the Saviour, and they companied with him during his abode in the world, and were found with one accord in one place on the day of Pentecost, and shared in the influences of that Comforter, whom Christ promised to send down upon his disciples on earth, from the place to which he had ascended in heaven ; and thus it is that the same men who started with the preaching of John at the work of putting their obvious and palpable transgressions away

from them, were met afterwards at the distance of years living the life of faith in Christ, and growing in meetness for a spiritual inheritance, by growing in all the graces and accomplishments of a spiritual obedience. There was a faith in Christ, which presided over the very first steps of their practical career; but it is worthy of being remarked, that they did not wait in indolence till this faith should receive its further augmentations. Upon this faith, humble as it was at its commencement, their Teacher exacted a corresponding obedience, and this obedience, so far from being suspended till what was lacking in their faith should be perfected, was the very path which conducted them to larger manifestations. Now is not faith a growing principle at this hour? Is not the faith of an insipient Christian different in its strength, and in the largeness of its contemplations, from the faith of him who, by reason of use, has had his senses well exercised to discern both the good and the evil? I am willing to concede it, for it accords with all my experience on the subject, that some anticipation, however faint, of the benefit to be derived from an offered Saviour; some apprehension, however indistinct, of the mercy of God in Christ Jesus; some hope, inspired by the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, and which nothing but the preaching of that Gospel in all its peculiarity will ever awaken in the mind,—that these are the principles which preside over the very first movements of a sinner, casting away from him his transgressions, and returning unto God. But let us not throw any impediment in the way of these first movements. Let us have a practical outset. Let us not be afraid of giving an immediate character of exertion to the very infancy of a Christian's career. To wait in slavish adherence to system, till the principle of faith be deposited with all the tenacity of a settled assurance in the mind, or the brilliancy of a finished light be thrown

around it, would be to act in the face of scriptural example. Let the gospel be preached in all its freeness at the very outset; but let us never forget, that to every varying degree of faith in the mind of the hearer there goes an obedience along with it; that to forsake the evil of his ways can never be pressed too early upon his observance; that this, and every subsequent degree of obedience, is the prescribed path to clearer manifestations;* and that, to attempt the establishment of a perfect faith by the single work of expounding the truth, is to strike out a spark of our own kindling—it is to do the thing in our own way—it is to throw aside the use of scriptural expedients, and to substitute the mere possession of a dogma, for that principle which, growing progressively within us, animates and sustains the whole course of a humble, and diligent, and assiduous, and pains-taking Christian.

Whence the fact, that the deriders and the enemies of evangelical truth set themselves forward as the exclusive advocates of morality? It is because many of its friends have not ventured to show so bold and so immediate a front on this subject as they ought to have done. They are positively afraid of placing morality on the fore-ground of their speculations. They do not like it to be so prominently brought forward at the commencement of their instructions. They have it, ay, and in a purer and holier form than its more ostentatious advocates; but they have thrown a doctrinal barrier around it, which hides it from the general observation. Would it not be better to drag it from this concealment—to bring it out to more immediate view—to place it in large and visible characters on the very threshold of our subject; and if our Saviour told his countrymen, at the very outset of their discipleship, that they who follow after him must forsake all,

* John, xiv. 21.; Acts, v. 32.

is there any thing to prevent us from battling it at the very outset of our ministrations, with all that is glaringly and obviously wrong? Much should be done to chase away the very general delusion which exists among the people of this country, that the preachers of faith are not the preachers of morality. If there be any thing in the arrangements of a favourite system which are at all calculated to foster this delusion, these arrangements should just be broke in upon. Obedience should be written upon every signal; and departure from all iniquity, should be made to float, in a bright and legible inscription, upon all our standards.

I call on you, my brethren, to abound in those good deeds, by which, if done in the body, Christ will be magnified in your bodies. I call on you for a prompt vindication of the truth as it is in Jesus, by your example and your lives. Let me hear of your being the most equitable masters, and the most faithful servants, and the most upright members of society, and the most watchful parents, and the most dutiful children. Never forget, that the object of the Saviour is to redeem you from all iniquity, and that every act of wilful indulgence, in any one species of iniquity, is a refusal to go along with him. Do maintain to the eye of by-standers the conspicuous front of a reforming, and conscientious, and ever-doing people. Meet the charge of those who are strangers to the power of the truth, by the noblest of all refutations—by the graces and accomplishments of a life given in faithful and entire dedication to the will of the Saviour. Let the remembrance of what he gave for you, ever stir you up to the sense of what you should give him back again; and while others talk of good works, in such a way as to depose Christ from his preeminence, do you perform these good works through Christ, by the power of his grace working in you mightily.

And think not that you have attained, or are already perfect. Have your eye ever directed to the perfect righteousness of Christ, as the only ground of your acceptance with God, and as the only example you should never cease to aspire after. Rest not in any one measure of attainment. Think not that you should stop short till you are righteous, even as he is glorious. Take unto you the whole armour of God, that you may be fitted for the contest, and prove that you are indeed born again by the anointing which you have received, being an anointing which remaineth. May the very God of peace sanctify you wholly. May he shed abroad his love in your hearts. And may the Spirit which I call on you to pray for, in the faith of Him who is entrusted with the dispensation of it, impel you to all diligence, that you may be found of Him, at his coming, without spot, and blameless.

I shall conclude this very hurried and imperfect Address, with the last words of my last sermon to you.

"It is not enough that you receive Christ for the single object of forgiveness, or as a Priest who has wrought out an atonement for you; for Christ offers himself in more capacities than this one, and you do not receive him truly, unless you receive him just as he offers himself. Again, it is not enough that you receive Christ only as a Priest and a Prophet; for all that he teaches will be to you a dead letter, unless you are qualified to understand and to obey it; and if you think that you are qualified by nature, you, in fact, refuse his teaching, at the very time that you profess him to be your teacher, for he says, 'without me ye can do nothing.' You must receive him for strength, as well as for forgiveness and direction, or, in other words, you must submit to him as your King, not merely to rule over you by his law, but to rule in you by his Spirit. You must live in constant dependance on the influences of his grace, and if you do so, you never will

stop short at any one point of obedience; but, knowing that the grace of God is all-powerful, you will suffer no difficulties to stop your progress; you will suffer no paltry limit of what unaided human nature can do, to bound your ambition after the glories of a purer and a better character than any earthly principle can accomplish; you will enter a career, of which you at this moment see not the end; you will try an ascent, of which the lofty eminence is hid in the darkness of futurity; the chilling sentiment, that no higher obedience is expected of me than what I can yield, will have no influence upon you, for the mighty stretch of attainment that you look forward to, is not what I can do, but what Christ can do in me; and, with the all-subduing instrument of his grace to help you through every difficulty, and to carry you in triumph over every opposition, you will press forward conquering and to conquer; and, while the world knoweth not the power of those great and animating hopes which sustain you, you will be making daily progress in a field of discipline and acquirement which they have never entered; and in patience and forgiveness, and gentleness and charity, and the love of God and the love of your neighbour, which is like unto the love of God, you will prove that a work of grace is going on in your hearts, even that work by which the image you lost at the fall is repaired and brought back again, the empire of sin within you is overthrown, the subjection of your hearts to what is visible and earthly is exchanged for the power of the unseen world over its every affection, and you be filled with such a faith, and such a love, and such a superiority to perishable things, as will shed a glory over the whole of your daily walk, and give to every one of your doings the high character of a candidate for eternity.

"Christ is offered to all of you for forgiveness. The man who takes him for this single object must be looking

at him with an eye half shut upon the revelation he makes of himself. Look at him with an open and a steadfast eye, and then I will call you a true believer; and sure I am, that if you do so, you cannot avoid seeing him in the earnestness of his desire that you should give up all sin, and enter from this moment into all obedience. True, and most true, my brethren, that faith will save you; but it must be a whole faith in a whole Bible. True, and most true, that they who keep the commandments of Jesus shall enter into life; but you are not to shrink from any one of these commandments, or to say because they are so much above the power of humanity, that you must give up the task of attempting them. True, and most true, that he who trusteth to his obedience as a saviour, is shifting his confidence from the alone foundation it can rest upon. Christ is your Saviour; and when I call upon you to rejoice in that reconciliation which is through him, I call upon you not to leave him for a single moment, when you engage in the work of doing those things which if left undone, will exclude us from the kingdom of heaven. Take him along with you into all your services. Let the sentiment ever be upon you, that what I am now doing I may do in my own strength to the satisfaction of man, but I must have the power of Christ resting upon the performance, if I wish to do it in the way that is acceptable to God. Let this be your habitual sentiment, and then the supposed opposition between faith and works vanishes into nothing. The life of a believer is made up of good works; and faith is the animating and the power-working principle of every one of them. The spirit of Christ actuates and sustains the whole course of your obedience. You walk not away from him, but in the language of the text, you 'walk in him,' (Col. ii. 6.) and as there is not one of your doings in which he does not feel a concern, and prescribe a duty

for you, so there is not one of them in which his grace is not in readiness to put the right principle into your heart, and to bring it out into your conduct, and to make your walk accord with your profession, so as to let the world see upon you without, the power and the efficacy of the sentiment within; and thus, while Christ has the whole merit of your forgiveness, he has the whole merit of your sanctification also, and the humble and deeply-felt consciousness of 'nevertheless not me, but the grace of God that is in me,' restores to Jesus Christ all the credit and all the glory which belong to him, by making him your only, and your perfect, and your entire, and your altogether Saviour.

"Choose him, then, my brethren, choose him as the Captain of your salvation. Let him enter into your hearts by faith, and let him dwell continually there. Cultivate a daily intercourse and a growing acquaintance with him. O, you are in safe company, indeed, when your fellowship is with him! The shield of his protecting mediatorship is ever between you and the justice of God; and out of his fulness there goeth a constant stream, to nourish, and to animate, and to strengthen every believer. Why should the shifting of human instruments so oppress and so discourage you, when he is your willing friend; when he is ever present, and is at all times in readiness; when he, the same to-day, yesterday, and forever, is to be met with in every place; and while his disciples here, giving way to the power of sight, are sorrowful, and in great heaviness, because they are to move at a distance from one another, he, my brethren, he has his eye upon all neighbourhoods and all countries, and will at length gather his disciples into one eternal family? With such a Master, let us quit ourselves like men. With the magnificence of eternity before us, let time, with all its fluctuations, dwindle into its own littleness. If God is pleased to

spare me, I trust I shall often meet with you in person, even on this side of the grave; but if not, let us often meet in prayer at the mercy-seat of God. While we occupy different places on earth, let our mutual intercessions for each other go to one place in heaven. Let the Saviour put our supplications into one censer; and be assured, my brethren, that after the dear and the much-loved scenery of this peaceful vale has disappeared from my eye, the people who live in it shall retain a warm and an ever-during place in my memory;—and this mortal body must be stretched on the bed of death, ere the heart which now animates it can resign its exercise of longing after you, and praying for you, that you may so receive Christ Jesus, and so walk in him, and so hold fast the things you have gotten, and so prove that the labour I have had among you has not been in vain; that when the sound of the last trumpet awakens us, these eyes, which are now bathed in tears, may open upon a scene of eternal blessedness, and we, my brethren, whom the providence of God has withdrawn for a little while from one another, may on that day be found side by side at the right hand of the everlasting throne."

APPENDIX.

Since the present edition of this work was putting to press, I have seen a review of it by the *Christian Instructor*, and the following are the immediate observations which the perusal of this review has suggested.

I meant no attack on any body of clergy, and I have made no attack upon them. The people whom I addressed were the main object on which my attention rested ; and any thing I have said in the style of animadversion, was chiefly, if not exclusively, with a reference to that perverseness which I think I have witnessed in the conceptions and habits of private Christians.

I have alluded, no doubt, to a method of treatment on the part of some of the teachers of Christianity, and which I believe to be both inefficient and unscriptural. But have I at all asserted the extent to which this method prevails? Have I ventured to fasten an imputation upon any marked or general body of Christian ministers? It was no object of mine to set forth or to signalize my own peculiarity in this matter; and if I rightly understand who the men are whom the reviewer has in his eye when he speaks of the evangelical clergy, then does he represent me as dealing out my censures against those whom I honestly believe to be the instrumental cause of nearly all the vital and substantial Christianity in the land.

Again, is it not possible for a man to have an awakened and tender sense of the sinfulness of one sin, and to have a very slender and inadequate sense of the sinfulness of another? Might not the first circumstance beget in his mind an honest and a general desire to be delivered from sin ; and might not the second circumstance account for the fact, that with this mourning for sin in the gross, he should put forth his hand without scruple to the commission of what is actually sinful? I do not know a more familiar exhibition of this, than that of a man who would be visited with remorse were he to walk in the fields on a Sabbath day at the time of divine service, and the very same man indulging without remorse his propensity to throw ridicule or discredit on an absent character. His actual remorse on the commission of all that he feels to be sinful, might lead a man to mourn over sin in the general ; but surely this general direction of his can have no such necessary influence, as the reviewer contends for, in the way of leading him to renounce what he does not feel to be sinful. But this is what he should be made to feel ; and it may be done in two ways,—either in the didactic way, by a formal announcement that the deed in question is contrary to the

law of God; or in the imperative way, by bidding him cease from the doing of it,—a way no less effective and scriptural than the former, and brought to bear in the New Testament upon men at the earliest conceivable stage of their progress from sin unto righteousness.

I share most cordially in opinion with the reviewer, that he might extend his observations greatly beyond the length of the original pamphlet, were he to say all that might be said on the topics brought forward in it. I believe that it would require the compass of an extended volume to meet every objection, and to turn the argument in every possible way. I did not anticipate all the notice that has been taken of this performance, and am fearful lest it should defeat the intended effect on the hearts of a plain people. With this feeling I close the discussion for the present; and my desire is, that in all I may afterwards say upon this subject, I may be preserved from that tone of controversy, which I feel to be hurtful to the practical influence of every truth it accompanies; and which, I fear, may have in so far infected my former communications, as to make it more fitted to arouse the speculative tendencies of the mind, and provoke to an intellectual warfare, than to tell on the conscience and on the doings of an earnest inquirer.

T. C.

Glasgow, December, 1815.

THE

INFLUENCE

OF

BIBLE SOCIETIES,

ON

THE TEMPORAL NECESSITIES OF THE POOR.

BY THE

REV. THOMAS CHALMERS,

KILMANY.

BIBLE SOCIETIES.

ARGUMENT.

1. *The Objection stated.*—2. *The Radical Answer to it.*—3. *But the Objection is not true in point of fact.*—4. *A former act of charity does not exempt from the obligation of a new act, if it can be afforded.*—5. *Estimate of the encroachment made by the Bible Society upon the funds of the country.*— 6. *A Subscriber to the Bible Society does not give less to the Poor on that account.*— 7. *Evidence for the truth of this assertion.*—8. *And explanation of its principle.* (1.) *The ability for other acts of charity nearly as entire as before.*—9. (2.) *And the disposition greater.*—10. *Poverty is better kept under by a preventive, than by a positive treatment.*—11. *Exemplified in Scotland.*—12. *The Bible Society has a strong preventive operation.*—13. *And therefore promotes the secular interests of the Poor.*—14. *The argument carried down to the case of Penny Societies.*—15. *Difficulty in the exposition of the argument.*—16. *The effects of a charitable endowment in a parish pernicious to the Poor.*—17. *By inducing a dependance upon it.*—18. *And stripping them of their industrious habits.*— 19. *The effects of a Bible Association are in an opposite direction to those of a charitable endowment.*—20. *And it stands completely free of all the objections to which a tax is liable.*—21. *A Bible Association gives dignity to the Poor.*—22. *And a delicate reluctance to pauperism.*—23. *The shame of pauperism is the best defence against it.*—24. *How a Bible Association augments this feeling.*—25. *By dignifying the Poor.*—26. *And adding to the influence of Bible Principles.*—27. *Exemplified in the humblest situation.*—28. *The progress of these Associations in the country.*— 29. *Compared with other Associations for the relief of temporal*

necessities.—30. The more salutary influence of Bible Associations.—31. And how they counteract the pernicious influence of other charities.—32. It is best to confide the secular relief of the Poor to individual benevolence.—33. And a Bible Association both augments and enlightens this principle.

1. WITHOUT entering into the positive claims of the Bible Society upon the generosity of the public, I shall endeavour to do away an objection which meets us at the very outset of every attempt to raise a subscription, or to found an institution in its favour. The secular necessities of the poor are brought into competition with it, and every shilling given to the Bible Society is represented as an encroachment upon that fund which was before allocated to the relief of poverty.

2. Admitting the fact stated in the objection to be true, we have an answer in readiness for it. If the Bible Society accomplish its professed object, which is, to make those who were before ignorant of the Bible better acquainted with it, then the advantage given more than atones for the loss sustained. We stand upon the high ground, that eternity is longer than time, and the unfading enjoyments of the one a boon more valuable than the perishable enjoyments of the other. Money is sometimes expended for the idle purpose of amusing the poor by the gratuitous exhibition of a spectacle or show. It is a far wiser distribution of the money when it is transferred from this object to the higher and more useful objects of feeding those among them who are hungry, clothing those among them who are naked, and paying for medicine or attendance to those among them who are sick. We make bold to say, that if money for the purpose could be got from no other quarter, it would be a wiser distribution still to withdraw it from the objects last mentioned to the supreme object of paying for the knowledge of religion to

those among them who are ignorant: and, at the hazard of being execrated by many, we do not hesitate to affirm, that it is better for the poor to be worse fed and worse clothed, than that they should be left ignorant of those Scriptures, which are able to make them wise unto salvation through the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

3. But the statement contained in the objection is not true. It seems to go upon the supposition, that the fund for relieving the temporal wants of the poor is the only fund which exists in the country; and that when any new object of benevolence is started, there is no other fund to which we can repair for the requisite expenses. But there are other funds in the country. There is a prodigious fund for the maintenance of Government, nor do we wish that fund to be encroached upon by a single farthing. There is a fund out of which the people of the land are provided in the necessaries of life: and before we incur the odium of trenching upon necessaries, let us first inquire, if there be no other fund in existence. Go then to all who are elevated above the class of mere labourers, and you will find in their possession a fund, out of which they are provided with what are commonly called the superfluities of life. We do not dispute their right to these superfluities, nor do we deny the quantity of pleasure which lies in the enjoyment of them. We only state the existence of such a fund, and that by a trifling act of self-denial on the part of those who possess it, we could obtain all that we are pleading for. It is a little hard, that the competition should be struck between the fund of the Bible Society and the fund for relieving the temporal wants of the poor, while the far larger and more transferable fund for superfluities is left out of consideration entirely, and suffered to remain an untouched and unimpaired quantity. In this way, the odium of hostility to the poor is fastened upon those who are labouring for

their most substantial interests, while a set of men who neglect the immortality of the poor, and would leave their souls to perish, are suffered to sheer off with the credit of all the finer sympathies of our nature.

4. To whom much is given, of them much will be required. Whatever be your former liberalities in another direction, when a new and a likely direction of benevolence is pointed out, the question still comes back upon you, What have you to spare? If there be a remainder left, it is by the extent of this remainder that you will be judged; and it is not right to set the claims of the Bible Society against the secular necessities of the poor, while means so ample are left, that the true way of instituting the competition is to set these claims against some personal gratification which it is in your power to abandon. Have a care, lest with the language of philanthropy in your mouth, you shall be found guilty of the cruellest indifference to the true welfare of the species, and lest the Discerner of your heart shall perceive how it prefers some sordid indulgence of its own to the dearest interests of those around you.

5. But let me not put to hazard the prosperity of our cause, by resting it on a standard of charity far too elevated for the general practice of the times. Let us now drop our abstract reasoning upon the respective funds, and come to an actual specification of their quantities. The truth is, that the fund for the Bible Society is so very small, that it is not entitled to make its appearance in any abstract argument whatever, and were it not to do away even the shadow of an objection, we would have been ashamed to have thrown the argument into the language of general discussion. What shall we think of the objection when told, that the whole yearly revenue of the Bible Society, as derived from the contributions of those who support it, does not amount to a halfpenny per month from each

householder in Britain and Ireland? Can this be considered as a serious invasion upon any one fund allotted to other destinations, and shall the most splendid and promising enterprise that ever benevolence was engaged in be arrested upon an objection so fanciful? We do not want to oppress any individual by the extravagance of our demands. It is not in great sums, but in the combination of littles, that our strength lies. It is the power of combination which resolves the mystery. Great has been the progress and activity of the Bible Society since its first institution. All we want is, that this rate of activity be kept up and extended. The above statement will convince the reader, that there is ample room for the extension. The whole fund for the secular wants of the poor may be left untouched, and as to the fund for luxuries, the revenue of the Bible Society may be augmented a hundred-fold before this fund is sensibly encroached upon. The veriest crumbs and sweepings of extravagance would suffice us; and it will be long, and very long, before any invasion of ours upon this fund shall give rise to any perceivable abridgment of luxury, or have the weight of a straw upon the general style and establishment of families.

6. But there is still another way of meeting the objection. Let us come immediately to a question upon the point of fact. Does a man, on becoming a subscriber to the Bible Society, give less to the secular wants of the poor than he did formerly? It is true, there is a difficulty in the way of obtaining an answer to this question. He who knows best what answer to give will be the last to proclaim it. In as far as the subscribers themselves are concerned, we must leave the answer to their own experience, and sure we are that that experience will not be against us. But it is not from this quarter that we can expect to obtain the wished for information. The benevolence of an individual does not stand out to the eye

of the public. The knowledge of its operations is confined to the little neighbourhood within which it expatiates. It is often kept from the poor themselves, and then the information we are in quest of is shut up with the giver in the silent consciousness of his own bosom, and with God in the book of his remembrance.

7. But much good has been done of late years by the combined exertions of individuals; and benevolence, when operating in this way, is necessarily exposed to public observation. Subscriptions have been started for almost every one object which benevolence can devise, and the published lists may furnish us with data for a partial solution of the proposed question. In point of fact then, those who subscribe for a religious object, subscribe with the greatest readiness and liberality for the relief of human affliction, under all the various forms in which it pleads for sympathy. This is quite notorious. The human mind, by singling out the eternity of others as the main object of its benevolence, does not withdraw itself from the care of sustaining them on the way which leads to eternity. It exerts an act of preference, but not an act of exclusion. A friend of mine has been indebted to an active and beneficent patron, for a lucrative situation in a distant country, but he wants money to pay his travelling expenses. I commit every reader to his own experience of human nature, when I rest with him the assertion, that if real kindness lay at the bottom of this act of patronage, the patron himself is the likeliest quarter from which the assistance will come. The man who signalizes himself by his religious charities, is not the last but the first man to whom I would apply in behalf of the sick and the destitute. The two principles are not inconsistent. They give support and nourishment to each other, or rather they are exertions of the same principle. This will appear in full display on the day of judgment; and

even in this dark and undiscerning world, enough of evidence is before us upon which the benevolence of the Christian stands nobly vindicated, and from which it may be shown, that, while its chief care is for the immortality of others, it casts a wide and a wakeful eye over all the necessities and sufferings of the species.

8. Nor have we far to look for the explanation. The two elements which combine to form an act of charity, are the ability and the disposition, and the question simply resolves itself into this, "In how far these elements will survive a donation to the Bible Society, so as to leave the other charities unimpaired by it?" It is certainly conceivable, that an individual may give every spare farthing of his income to this institution. In this case, there is a total extinction of the first element. But in point of fact, this is never done, or done so rarely as not to be admitted into any general argument. With by far the greater number of subscribers, the ability is not sensibly encroached upon. There is no visible retrenchment in the superfluities of life. A very slight and partial change in the direction of that fund which is familiarly known by the name of *pocket-money* can, generally speaking, provide for the whole amount of the donation in question. There are a thousand floating and incidental expenses, which can be given up without almost the feeling of a sacrifice, and the diversion of a few of them to the charity we are pleading for, leaves the ability of the giver to all sense as entire as before.

9. But the second element is subject to other laws, and the formal calculations of arithmetic do not apply to it. The disposition is not like the ability, a given quantity which suffers an abstraction by every new exercise. The effect of a donation upon the purse of the giver, is not the same with the moral influence of that donation upon his heart. Yet the two are assimilated by our an-

tagonists, and the pedantry of computation carries them to results which are in the face of all experience. It is not so easy to awaken the benevolent principle out of its sleep, as, when once awakened in behalf of one object, to excite and to interest it in behalf of another. When the bar of selfishness is broken down, and the flood-gates of the heart are once opened, the stream of beneficence can be turned into a thousand directions. It is true, that there can be no beneficence without wealth, as there can be no stream without water. It is conceivable, that the opening of the flood-gates may give rise to no flow, as the opening of a poor man's heart to the distresses of those around him may give rise to no act of almsgiving. But we have already proved the abundance of wealth. [Sec. 8.] It is the selfishness of the inaccessible heart which forms the mighty barrier, and if this could be done away, a thousand fertilizing streams would issue from it. Now, this is what the Bible Society, in many instances, has accomplished. It has unlocked the avenue to many a heart, which was before inaccessible. It has come upon them with all the energy of a popular and prevailing impulse. It has created in them a new taste and a new principle. It has opened the fountain, and we are sure that, in every district of the land where a Bible Association exists, the general principle of benevolence is more active and more expanding than ever.

10. And after all, what is the best method of providing for the secular necessities of the poor? Is it by labouring to meet the necessity after it has occurred, or by labouring to establish a principle and a habit which would go far to prevent its existence? If you wish to get rid of a noxious stream, you may first try to intercept it by throwing across a barrier; but in this way, you only spread the pestilential water over a greater extent of ground, and when the bason is filled, a stream as copious

as before is formed out of its overflow. The most effectual method, were it possible to carry it into accomplishment, would be, to dry up the source. The parallel in a great measure holds. If you wish to extinguish poverty, combat with it in its first elements. If you confine your beneficence to the relief of actual poverty, you do nothing. Dry up, if possible, the spring of poverty, for every attempt to intercept the running stream has totally failed. The education and the religious principle of Scotland have not annihilated pauperism, but they have restrained it to a degree that is almost incredible to our neighbours of the South. They keep down the mischief in its principle. They impart a sobriety and a right sentiment of independence to the character of our peasantry. They operate as a check upon profligacy and idleness. The maintenance of parish schools is a burden upon the landed property of Scotland, but it is a cheap defence against the poor-rates, a burden far heavier, and which is aggravating perpetually. The writer of this paper knows of a parish in Fife, the average maintenance of whose poor is defrayed by twenty-four pounds sterling a year, and of a parish, of the same population, in Somersetshire, where the annual assessments come to thirteen hundred pounds sterling. The preventive regimen of the one country does more than the positive applications of the other. In England, they have suffered poverty to rise to all the virulence of a formed and obstinate disease. But they may as well think of arresting the destructive progress of a torrent by throwing across an embankment, as think that the mere positive administration of relief, will put a stop to the accumulating mischiefs of poverty.

11. The exemption of Scotland from the miseries of pauperism is due to the education which their people receive at schools, and to the Bible which their scholarship gives them access to. The man who subscribes to the

divine authority of this simple saying, "If any would not work neither should he eat," possesses, in the good treasure of his own heart, a far more effectual security against the hardships of indigence, than the man who is trained, by the legal provisions of his country, to sit in slothful dependence upon the liberalities of those around him. It is easy to be eloquent in the praise of those liberalities, but the truth is, that they may be carried to the mischievous extent of forming a depraved and beggarly population. The hungry expectations of the poor will ever keep pace with the assessments of the wealthy, and their eye will be averted from the exertion of their own industry, as the only right source of comfort and independence. It is quite in vain to think, that positive relief will ever do away the wretchedness of poverty. Carry the relief beyond a certain limit, and you foster the diseased principle which gives birth to poverty. On this subject, the people of England feel themselves to be in a state of almost inextricable helplessness, and they are not without their fears of some mighty convulsion, which must come upon them with all the energy of a tempest, before this devouring mischief can be swept away from the face of their community.

12. If any thing can avert this calamity from England, it will be the education of their peasantry, and this is a cause to which the Bible Society is contributing its full share of influence. A zeal for the circulation of the Bible, is inseparable from a zeal for extending among the people the capacity of reading it; and it is not to be conceived, that the very same individual can be eager for the introduction of this volume into our cottages, and sit inactive under the galling reflection, that it is still a sealed book to many thousands of the occupiers. Accordingly we find, that the two concerns are keeping pace with one another. The Bible Society does not overstep the sim-

plicity of its assigned object: But the members of that Society receive an impulse from the cause, which carries them to promote the education of the poor, either by their individual exertions, or by giving their support to the Society for Schools. The two Societies move in concert. Each contributes an essential element in the business of enlightening the people. The one furnishes the book of knowledge, and the other furnishes the key to it. This division of employment, as in every other instance, facilitates the work, and renders it more effective. But it does not hinder the same individual from giving his countenance to both; and sure I am, that the man whose feelings have been already warmed, and whose purse has been already drawn in behalf of the one, is a likelier subject for an application in behalf of the other, than he whose money is still untouched, but whose heart is untouched also.

13. It will be seen then, that the Bible Society is not barely defensible, but may be pled for upon that very ground on which its enemies have raised their opposition to it. Its immediate object is neither to feed the hungry nor to clothe the naked, but in every country under the benefit of its exertions, there will be less hunger to feed, and less nakedness to clothe. It does not cure actual poverty, but it anticipates eventful poverty. It aims its decisive thrust at the heart and principle of the mischief, and instead of suffering it to form into the obstinacy of an inextirpable disease, it smothers and destroys it in the infancy of its first elements. The love which worketh no ill to his neighbour will not suffer the true Christian to live in idleness upon another's bounty: and he will do as Paul did before him, he will labour with his hands rather than be burdensome. Could we reform the improvident habits of the people, and pour the healthful infusion of Scripture principle into their hearts, it would

reduce the existing poverty of the land to a very humble fraction of its present extent. We make bold to say, that in ordinary times there is not one-tenth of the pauperism of England due to unavoidable misfortune. It has grown out of a vicious and impolitic system, and the millions which are raised every year have only served to nourish and extend it. Now, the Bible Society is a prime agent in the work of counteracting this disorder. Its mode of proceeding carries in it all the cheapness and all the superior efficacy of a preventive operation. With a revenue not equal to the poor-rates of many a county, it is doing more even for the secular interests of the poor than all the charities of England united; and while a palling and injudicious sympathy is pouring out its complaints against it, it is sowing the seeds of character and independence, and rearing for future days the spectacle of a thriving, substantial, and well-conditioned peasantry.

14. I have hitherto been supposing, that the rich only are the givers, but I now call on the poor to be sharers in this work of charity. It is true, that of these poor there are some who depend on charity for their subsistence, and these have no right to give what they receive from others. And there are some who have not arrived at this state of dependence, but are on the very verge of it. Let us keep back no part of the truth from them, "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." There are others again, and these I apprehend form by far the most numerous class of society, who can maintain themselves in humble, but honest independence, who can spare a little and not feel it, who can do what Paul advises,* lay aside their penny a week as God hath prospered them, who can share that blessedness which the Saviour spoke of when he said, It was more blessed to

* 1 Corinthians xvi. 2.

give than to receive ; who, though they cannot equal their rich neighbours in the amount of their donation, can bestow their something, and can, at all events, carry in their bosom a heart as warm to the cause, and call down as precious a blessing from the God who witnesses it. The Bible Society is opposed on the ground of its diverting a portion of relief from the secular necessities of the poor, even when the rich only are called upon to support it. When the application for support is brought down to the poor themselves, and instead of the recipients, it is proposed to make them the dispensers of charity, we may lay our account with the opposition being still more clamorous.—We undertake to prove, that this opposition is founded on a fallacy, and that, by interesting the great mass of a parish in the Bible Society, and assembling them into a penny association for the support of it, you raise a defence against the extension of pauperism.

15. We feel a difficulty in this undertaking, not from any uncertainty which hangs over the principle, but from the difficulty of bringing forward a plain and popular exhibition of it. However familiar the principle may be to a student of political science, it carries in it an air of paradox to the multitude, and it were well if this air of paradox were the only obstacle to its reception. But to the children of poesy and fine sentiment, the principle in question carries in it an air of barbarity also, and all the rigour of a pure and impregnable argument has not been able to protect the conclusions of Malthus from their clamorous indignation. There is a kind of hurrying sensibility about them which allows neither time nor temper for listening to any calculation on the subject, and there is not a more striking vanity under the sun, than that the substantial interests of the poor have suffered less from the malignant and the unfeeling, than from those who give without wisdom and who feel without consideration :

Blessed is he that *wisely* doth
The poor man's case *consider*.

16. Let me put the case of two parishes, in the one of which there is a known and public endowment, out of which an annual sum is furnished for the maintenance of the poor; and that in the other there is no such endowment. At the outset, the poor of the first parish may be kept in greater comfort than the poor of the second; but it is the lesson of all experience, that no annual sum, however great, will be able to keep them permanently in greater comfort. The certain effect of an established provision for the poor is a relaxation of their economical habits, and an increased number of improvident marriages. When their claim to a provision is known, that claim is always counted upon, and it were well, if to flatter their natural indolence, they did not carry the calculation beyond the actual benefit they can ever receive. But this is what they always do. When a public charity is known and counted upon, the relaxation of frugal and providential habits is carried to such an extent, as not only to absorb the whole produce of the charity, but to leave new wants unprovided for, and the effect of the benevolent institution is just to create a population more wretched and more clamorous than ever.

17. In the second parish, the economical habits of the people are kept unimpaired, and just because their economy is forced to take a higher aim, and to persevere in it. The aim of the first people is to provide for themselves a part of their maintenance: The aim of the second people is to provide for themselves their whole maintenance. We do not deny, that even among the latter we will meet with distress and poverty, just such distress and such poverty as are to be found in the average of Scottish parishes. This finds its alleviation in private benevo-

lence. To alleviate poverty is all that can be done for it; to extinguish it, we fear is hopeless. Sure we are, that the known and regular provisions of England will never extinguish it, and that, in respect of the poor themselves, the second parish is under a better system than the first. The poor-rates are liable to many exceptions, but there is none of them more decisive with him who cares for the eternity of the poor, than the temptation they hold out to positive guilt, the guilt of not working with their own hands, and so becoming burdensome to others.*

18. Let us conceive a political change in the circumstances of the country, and that the public charity of the first parish fell among the ruin of other institutions. Then its malignant influence would be felt in all its extent; and it would be seen, that it, in fact, had impoverished those whom it professed to sustain, that it had stript them of a possession far more valuable than all it had ever given, that it had stripped them of industrious habits, and left those whom its influence never reached wealthier in the resources of their own superior industry, than the artificial provisions of an unwise and meddling benevolence could ever make them.

19. The comparison between these two parishes paves the way for another comparison. Let me now put the case of a third parish, where a Bible Association is instituted, and where the simple regulation of a penny a week throws it open to the bulk of the people. What effect has this upon their economical habits? It just throws them at a greater distance from the thriftlessness which prevails in the first parish, and leads them to strike a higher aim in the way of economy than the people of the second. The general aim of economy in humble life is to keep even with the world; but it is known to every man at all familiar with that class of society, that the great

* Acts xx. 35. 1 Timothy v. 8.

majority may strike their aim a little higher, and in point of fact, have it in their power to redeem an annual sum from the mere squanderings of mismanagement and carelessness. The unwise provisions in the parish have had the effect of sinking the income of the poor below their habits of expenditure, and they are brought, permanently and irrecoverably brought into a state of pauperism. In the second parish, the income, generally speaking, is even with the habits of expenditure. In the third, the income is above the habits of expenditure, and above it by the annual sum contributed to the Bible Society. The circumstance of being members to such a Society throws them at a greater distance from pauperism than if they had not been members of it.

20. The effect on the economical habits of the people would just be the same in whatever way the stated annual sum was obtained from them, even though a compulsory tax were the instrument of raising it.* This assimilation of our plan to a tax may give rise to a world of impetuous declamation, but let it ever be remembered, that the institution of a Bible Society gives you the whole benefit of such a tax without its odiousness. It brings up their economy to a higher pitch, but it does so, not in the way which they resist, but in the way which they choose. The single circumstance of its being a *voluntary* act, forms the defence and the answer to all the clamours of an affected sympathy. You take from the poor. No! they give. You take beyond their ability. Of this they are the best judges. You abridge their comforts. No! there is a comfort in the exercise of charity: there is a comfort in the act of lending a hand to a noble en-

* I must here suppose the sum to be a stated one, and a feeling of security on the part of the people, that the tax shall not be subject to variation at the caprice of an arbitrary government.

terprise: there is a comfort in the contemplation of its progress: there is a comfort in rendering a service to a friend, and when that friend is the Saviour, and that service the circulation of the message he left behind him, it is a comfort which many of the poor are ambitious to share in. Leave them to judge of their comfort, and if in point of fact, they do give their penny a week to a Bible Society, it just speaks them to have more comfort in this way of spending it than in any other which occurs to them.

21. Perhaps it does not occur to those friends of the poor while they are sitting in judgment on their circumstances and feelings, how unjustly and how unworthily they think of them. They do not conceive how truth and benevolence can be at all objects to them, and suppose, that after they have got the meat to feed, the house to shelter, the raiment to cover them, there is nothing else that they will bestow a penny upon. They may not be able to express their feelings on a suspicion so ungenerous, but I shall do it for them: "We have souls as well as you, and precious to our hearts is the Saviour who died for them. It is true we have our distresses, but these have bound us more firmly to our Bibles, and it is the desire of our hearts, that a gift so precious, should be sent to the poor of other countries. The word of God is our hope and our rejoicing; we desire that it may be theirs also, that the wandering savage may know it and be glad, and the poor negro, under the lash of his master, may be told of a Master in heaven who is full of pity, and full of kindness. Do you think that sympathy for such as these is your peculiar attribute? Know that our hearts are made of the same materials with your own, that we can feel as well as you, and out of the earnings of a hard and an honest industry, we shall give an offering to the cause; nor shall we cease our exertions till the message of salvation be carried round the globe, and made known to

the countless millions who live in guilt, and who die in darkness."

22. And here it is obvious that a superior habit of economy is not the only defence which the Bible Society raises against pauperism. The smallness of the sum contributed may give a littleness to this argument, but not, let it be remembered, without giving an equal littleness to the objection of those who declaim against the institution, on the ground of its oppressiveness to the poor contributors. The great defence which such a Society establishes against pauperism, is the superior tone of dignity and independence which it imparts to the character of him who supports it. He stands on the high ground of being a dispenser of charity; and before he can submit to become a recipient of charity, he must let himself farther down than a poor man in ordinary circumstances. To him the transition will be more violent, and the value of this principle will be acknowledged by all who perceive that it is reluctance on the part of the poor man to become a pauper, which forms the mighty barrier against the extension of pauperism. A man by becoming the member of a benevolent association, puts himself into the situation of a giver. He stands at a greater distance than before from the situation of a receiver. He has a wider interval to traverse before he can reach this point. He will feel it a greater degradation, and to save himself from it, he will put forth all his powers of frugality and exertion. The idea of restraining pauperism by external administrations, seems now to be generally abandoned. But could we thus enter into the hearts of the poor, we would get in at the root of the mischief, and by fixing there a habit of economy and independence, more would be done for them, than by all the liberalities of all the opulent.

23. In those districts of Scotland where poor-rates

are unknown, the descending avenue which leads to pauperism is powerfully guarded by the stigma which attaches to it. Remove this stigma, and our cottagers, now rich in the possession of contentment and industry, would resign their habits, and crowd into the avenue by thousands. The shame of descending, is the powerful stimulus which urges them to contest it manfully with the difficulties of their situation, and which bears them through in all the pride of honest independence. Talk of this to the people of the South, and it sounds in their ears like an Arcadian story. But there is not a clergyman among us who has not witnessed the operation of the principle in all its fineness, and in all its moral delicacy; and surely a testimony is due to those village heroes who so nobly struggle with the difficulties of pauperism, that they may shun and surmount its degradation.

24. A Bible Association gives additional vigour and buoyancy to this elevated principle. The trifle which it exacts from its contributor is in truth never missed by him, but it puts him in the high attitude of a giver, and every feeling which it inspires, is on the side of independence and delicacy. Go over each of these feelings separately, and you find that they are all fitted to fortify his dislike at the shame and dependence of pauperism. There is a consciousness of importance which unavoidably attaches to the share he has taken in the support and direction of a public charity. There is the expanding effect of the information which comes to him through the medium of the circulated reports, which lays before him the mighty progress of an institution reaching to all countries, and embracing in its ample grasp, the men of all latitudes and all languages, which deeply interests him in the object, and perpetuates his desire of promoting it. A man with his heart so occupied, and his attention so directed, is not capable of a voluntary descent to pauperism. He has in

fact become a more cultivated and intellectual being than formerly. His mind gathers an enlargement from the wide and animating contemplations which are set before him, and we appeal to the reflection of every reader, if such a man will descend as readily to a dependence on the charity of others, as he whose mind is void of information, and whose feelings are void of dignity.

25. In such associations, the rich and the poor meet together. They share in one object, and are united by the sympathy of one feeling, and of one interest. We have not to look far into human nature to be convinced of the happy and the harmonising influence which this must have upon society, and how in the glow of one common cordiality, all asperity and discontent must give way to the kindlier principles of our nature. The days have been, when the very name of an association carried terror and suspicion along with it.—In a Bible Association there is nothing which our rulers need to be afraid of, and they may rest assured, that the moral influence of such institutions is all on the side of peace and loyalty. But to confine myself to the present argument. Who does not see that they exalt the general tone and character of our people, that they bring them nearer to the dignity of superior and cultivated life, and that therefore, though their direct aim is not to mitigate poverty, they go a certain way to dry up the most abundant of its sources.

26. Let me add, that the direct influence of Bible principles is inseparable from a zeal for the circulation of the Bible. It is not to be conceived, that anxiety for sending it to others can exist, while there is no reverence for it among ourselves, and we appeal to those districts where such associations have been formed, if a more visible attention to the Bible, and a more serious impression of its authority, is not the consequence of them. Now the lessons of this Bible are all on the side of industry,

They tell us that it is more blessed to give than to receive, and that therefore, a man, who, by his own voluntary idleness is brought under the necessity of receiving, has disinherited himself of a blessing. The poor must have bread, but the Bible commands and exhorts, that wherever it is possible, that bread should be *their own*, and that all who are able should make it their own by working for it.* No precept can be devised which bears more directly on the source of pauperism. The minister, who, in his faithful exposition of the Bible, urged this precept successfully upon his people, would do much to extinguish pauperism among them. It is true that he does not always urge successfully; but surely if success is to be more looked for in one quarter than in another, it is among the pious and intelligent peasantry whom he has assembled around him, whom he has formed into a little society for the circulation of the Bible, and whose feelings he has interested in this purest and worthiest of causes.

27. Nor is the operation of this principle confined to the actual contributor. We have no doubt that it has been beautifully exemplified even among those, who, unable to give their penny a week, either stand on the very verge of pauperism, or have got within its limits. They are unable to give any thing of their own, but they may be able at the same time to forego the wonted allowance which they received from another, or a part of it. The refusals of the poor to take an offered charity, or to take the whole amount of the offer, are quite familiar to a Scottish clergyman; and the plea on which they set the refusal, that it would be taking from others who are even needier than they, entitles them when honestly advanced to all the praise of benevolence. A spirit of pious attachment to the Bible would prompt a refusal of the same kind. You have other and higher claims upon you; you

* 2 Thessalonians iii. 12.

have the spiritual necessities of the world to provide for, and that you may be the more able to make the provision, leave me to the frugality of my own management. In this way the principle descends, and carries its healthful influence into the very regions of pauperism. It is the only principle competent to its extirpation. The obvious expedient of a positive supply to meet the wants of existing poverty, has failed, and the poor-rates of England will ever be a standing testimony to the utter inefficiency of this expedient, which, instead of killing the disease, has rooted and confirmed it. Try the other expedient then. The remedy against the extension of pauperism does not lie in the liberalities of the rich. It lies in the hearts and habits of the poor. Plant in their bosoms a principle of independence. Give a higher tone of delicacy to their characters. Teach them to recoil from pauperism as a degradation. The degradation may at times be unavoidable, but the thing which gives such alarming extent to the mischief, is the debasing influence of poor-rates, whereby, in the vast majority of instances, the degradation is voluntary. But if there be an exalting influence in Bible Associations to counteract this, if they foster a right spirit of importance; above all, if they secure a readier submission to the lessons of the volume which they are designed to circulate, who does not see, that in proportion as they are multiplied and extended over the face of the country, they carry along with them the most effectual regimen for preventing the extension of poverty.

28. And here it may be asked, if it be at all likely that these Associations will extend to such a degree as to have a sensible influence upon the habits of the country? Nothing more likely. A single individual of influence in each parish, would make the system universal. In point of fact it is making progress every month, and such is the wonderful spirit of exertion which is now abroad, that in

a few years every little district of the land may become the seat of a Bible Society. We are now upon the dawn of very high anticipations, and the wholesome effect upon the habits and principles of the people at home, is not the least of them. That part of the controversy which relates to the direct merits of the Bible Society may be looked upon as already exhausted ;* and could the objection, founded on its interference with the relief of the poor, be annihilated, or still more, could it be converted into a positive argument in its behalf, we are not aware of a single remaining plea upon which a rational or benevolent man can refuse his concurrence to it.

29. And the plea of conceived injury to the poor deserves to be attended to. It wears an amiable complexion, and we believe, that in some instances, a real sympathy with their distresses, lies at the bottom of it. Let sympathy be guided by consideration. It is the part of a Christian to hail benevolence in all its forms ; but when a plan is started for the relief of the destitute, is he to be the victim of a popular and sentimental indignation, because he ventures to take up the question whether the plan be really an effective one? We know that in various towns of Scotland you meet with two distinct Penny Societies, one a Bible Association, the other for the relief of the indigent. It is to be regretted that there should ever be any jealousy between them, but we believe, that agreeably to what we have already said, it will often be found that the one suggested the other, and that the supporters of the former, are the most zealous, and active,

* See Dealtry's pamphlets. Letter from the late Dr. Murray, Professor of Hebrew in the University of Edinburgh, to Dr. Charles Stuart. Steinkoff's Tour on the Continent. Edinburgh Review, vol. xix. p. 39 ; and above all, the reports and summaries of the institution itself, where you will meet with a cloud of testimonies from Moravians, Missionaries, Roman Catholics, the Literati of our chief European towns, and men of piety and public spirit in all quarters of the world.

and useful friends of the latter. We cannot however suppress the fact, that there is now a growing apprehension lest the growth of the latter Societies should break down the delicacies of the lower orders, and pave the way for a permanent introduction of poor-rates. There is a pretty general impression, that the system may be carried too far, and the uncertainty as to the precise limit has given the feeling to many who have embarked with enthusiasm, that they are now engaged in a ticklish and questionable undertaking. I do not attempt either to confirm or to refute this impression, but I count it a piece of justice to the associations I am pleading for, to assert, that they stand completely free of every such exception. The Bible Society is making steady advances towards the attainment of its object, and the sure effect of multiplying its subscribers is to conduct it in a shorter time to the end of its labours. A Society for the relief of temporal necessities is grasping at an object that is completely unattainable, and the mischief is, that the more known, and the more extensive, and the more able it becomes, it is sure to be more counted on, and at last, to create more poverty than it provides for. The Bible Society aims at making every land a land of Bibles, and this aim it will accomplish after it has translated the Bible into all languages, and distributed a sample large enough to create a native and universal demand for them.* After the people of the world have acquired such a taste for the Bible, and such a sense of its value as to purchase it for themselves, the Society terminates its career, and instead of the corruptions and abuses which other charities scatter in their way, it leaves the poor to

* But this native demand never will be created without the exertion of Missionaries, and the above reasoning applies, in its most important parts, to Missionary Associations. *See Appendix.*

whom it gives, more enlightened, and the poor from whom it takes, more elevated, than it found them.

30. 'Charity,' says Shakspeare, 'is twice blest. It blesses him who gives, and him who takes.' This is far from being universally true. There is a blessing annexed to the heart which deviseth liberal things. Perhaps the founder of the English poor-rates acquired this blessing, but the indolence and depravity which they have been the instrument of spreading over the face of the country, are incalculable. If we wish to see the assertion of the poet realised in its full extent, go to such a charity as we are now pleading for, where the very exercise of giving on the one hand and the instruction received on the other, have the effect of narrowing the limits of pauperism, by creating a more virtuous and dignified population.

31. There is poverty to be met with in every land, and we are ready to admit, that a certain proportion of it is due to unavoidable misfortune. But it is no less true, that in those countries where there is a known and established provision for the necessities of the poor, the greater proportion of the poverty which exists in them is due to the debasing influence of a public charity on the habits of the people. The institution we are pleading for counteracts this influence. It does not annihilate all poverty, but it tends to annihilate the greater part of it. It arrests the progress of the many who were making a voluntary descent to pauperism, and it leaves none to be provided for but the few who have honestly struggled against their distresses, and have struggled in vain.

32. And how shall they be provided for? You may erect a public institution. This in fact is the same with erecting a signal of invitation, and the voluntary and self-created poor will rush in, to the exclusion of those modest and unobtrusive poor who are the genuine objects of

charity. This is the never-failing mischief of a known and established provision,* and it has been sadly exemplified in England. The only method of doing away the mischief is to confide the relief of the poor to individual benevolence. This draws no dependence along with it. It is not counted upon like a public and proclaimed charity. It brings the claims of the poor under the discriminating eye of a neighbour, who will make a difference between a case of genuine helplessness, and a case of idleness or misconduct. It turns the tide of benevolence into its true channel, and it will ever be found, that under its operation, the poverty of misfortune is better seen to, and the poverty of improvidence and guilt is more effectually prevented.

33. My concluding observation then is, that the extension of Bible Societies, while it counteracts in various directions the mischief of poor-rates, augments that principle of individual benevolence which is the best substitute for poor-rates. You add to the stock of individual benevolence, by adding to the number of benevolent individuals, and this is the genuine effect of a Bible Association. Or, you add to the stock of individual benevolence in a country, by adding to the intensity of the benevolent principle, and this is the undoubted tendency of a Bible Association.† And what is of mighty importance in this argument, a Bible Association not only awakens the benevolent principle, but it enlightens it. It establishes an intercourse between the various orders of society, and on no former occasion in the history of this country, have the

* We must here except all those institutions, the object of which is to provide for involuntary distress, such as hospitals, and dispensaries, and asylums for the lunatic or the blind. A man may resign himself to idleness, and become wilfully poor, that he may eat of the public bread, but he will not become wilfully sick or maimed that he may receive medicines from a dispensary, or undergo an operation in an hospital.

† Sec. 9.

rich and the poor come so often together upon a footing of good will. The kindly influence of this is incalculable. It brings the poor under the eye of their richer neighbours. The visits and inquiries connected with the objects of the Bible Society, bring them into contact with one another. The rich come to be more skilled in the wants and difficulties of the poor, and by entering their houses, and joining with them in conversation, they not only acquire a benevolence towards them, but they gather that knowledge which is so essential to guide and enlighten their benevolence.

APPENDIX.

It is evident, that the above reasoning applies, in its chief parts, to benevolent Associations, instituted for any other religious purpose. It is not necessary to restrict the argument to the case of Bible Associations. I should be sorry if the Bible Society were to engross the religious benevolence of the public, and if, in the multiplication of its auxiliaries over the face of the country, it were to occupy the whole ground, and leave no room for the great and important claims of other institutions.

Of this I conceive that there is little danger. The revenue of each of these Societies is founded upon voluntary contributions, and what is voluntary may be withdrawn or transferred to other objects. I may give both to a Bible and a Missionary Society, or if I can only afford to give to one, I may select either, according to my impression of their respective claims. In this way a vigilant and discerning public will suit its benevolence to the urgency of the case, and it is evident, that each institution can employ the same methods for obtaining patronage and support. Each can, and does bring forward a yearly statement of its claims and necessities. Each has the same access to the public through the medium of the pulpit or the press. Each can send its advocates over the face of the country, and every individual, forming his own estimate of their respective claims, will apportion his benevolence accordingly.

Now what is done by an individual, may be done by every such Association as I am now pleading for. Its members may sit in judgment on the various schemes of utility which are now in operation, and though originally formed as an auxiliary to the Bible Society, it may keep itself open to other calls, and occasionally give of its funds to Missionaries, or Moravians, or the Society for Gaelic Schools, or the African Institution, or to the Jewish, and Baptist, and Hibernian, and Lancasterian Societies.

In point of fact, the subordinate Associations of the country are tending towards this arrangement, and it is a highly beneficial arrangement. It carries in it a most salutary control over all these various institutions, each labouring to maintain itself in reputation with the public, and to secure the countenance of this great Patron. Indolence and corruption may lay hold of an endowed charity, but when the charity depends upon public favour, a few glaring examples of mismanagement would annihilate it.

During a few of the first years of the Bible Society, the members of other Societies were alarmed at the rapid extension of its popularity, and expressed their fears lest it should engross all the attention and benevolence of the religious public.—But the reverse has happened, and a principle made use of in the body of this pamphlet may be well illustrated by the history of this matter. [Sec. 9.] The Bible Society has drawn a great yearly sum of money from the public, and the first impression was, that it would exhaust the fund for religious charities. But while it drew money from the hand, it sent a fresh and powerful excitement of Christian benevolence into the heart, and under the influence of this creative principle, the fund has extended to such a degree, as not only to meet the demands of the new Society, but to yield a more abundant revenue to the older Societies than ever. We believe that the excitement goes much farther than this, and that many a deed of ordinary charity could be traced to the impulse of the cause we are pleading for. We hazard the assertion, that many thousands of those who contribute to the Bible Society, find in themselves a greater readiness to every good work, since the period of their connexion with it, and that in the wholesome channel of individual benevolence, more hunger is fed, and more nakedness clothed throughout the land, than at any period anterior to the formation of our Religious Societies.

The alarm, grounded upon the tendency of these Societies with their vast revenues, to impoverish the country, is ridiculous. If ever their total revenue shall amount to a sum which can make it worthy of consideration to an enlightened economist at all, it may be proved that it trenches upon no national interest whatever, that it leaves population and Public Revenue on precisely the same footing of extent and prosperity in which it found them, and that it interferes with no one object which Patriot or Politician needs to care for. In the mean time it may suffice to state, that the income of all the Bible and Missionary Societies in the island, would not do more than defray the annual maintenance of one ship of the line.—When put by the side of the millions which are lavished without a sigh, on the enterprises of war, it is nothing; and shall this veriest trifle be grudged to the advancement of a cause, which, when carried to its accomplishment, will put an end to war, and banish all its passions and atrocities from the world?

I should be sorry if Penny Associations were to bind themselves down to the support of the Bible Society. I should like to see them exercising a judgment over the numerous claims which are now before the public, and giving occasionally of their funds to other religious institutions. The effect of this very exercise would be to create a liberal and well-informed peasantry, to open a wider sphere to their contemplations, and to raise the standard, not merely of piety, but of general intelligence among them. The diminution of pauperism is only part of the general effect which the multiplication of these Societies will bring about in the country; and if my limits allowed me, I might expatiate on their certain influence in raising the tone and character of the British population.

A

SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE

SOCIETY IN SCOTLAND

FOR PROPAGATING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE,

(INCORPORATED BY ROYAL CHARTER.)

AT THEIR ANNIVERSARY MEETING,

IN THE HIGH CHURCH OF EDINBURGH,

ON THURSDAY, JUNE 2, 1814.

BY THE

REV. THOMAS CHALMERS, D. D.
Minister of the Tron Church, Glasgow.

SOCIETY HALL, *June* 2, 1814.

At a General Meeting of the SOCIETY IN SCOTLAND FOR PROPAGATING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE,

JAMES ROBERTSON, ESQ. *Clerk to the Signet,*
In the Chair,

(In absence of the Right Honorable FRANCIS LORD SEAFORTH, *President.*)

The thanks of the Society were given from the Chair, to the REV. THOMAS CHALMERS, *of Kilmany, for his excellent Sermon, this day preached before them; and he was requested to permit his Manuscript to be printed, for the benefit of the Society.*

JOHN CAMPBELL, *Secretary.*

SERMON.

JOHN i. 46.

And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

THE principle of association, however useful in the main, has a blinding and misleading effect in many instances. Give it a wide enough field of induction to work upon, and it will carry you to a right conclusion upon any one case or question that comes before you. But the evil is, that it often carries you forward with as much confidence upon a limited, as upon an enlarged field of experience, and the man of narrow views will, upon a few paltry individual recollections, be as obstinate in the assertion of his own maxim, and as boldly come forward with his own sweeping generality, as if the whole range of nature and observation had been submitted to him.

To aggravate the mischief, the opinion thus formed upon the specialities of his own limited experience, obtains a holding and a tenacity in his mind, which dispose him to resist all the future facts and instances that come before him. Thus it is that the opinion becomes a prejudice; and that no statement, however true or however impressive, will be able to dislodge it. You may accumulate facts upon facts, but the opinion he has already formed,

has acquired a certain right of pre-occupancy over him. It is the law of the mind which, like the similar law of society, often carries it over the original principles of justice; and it is this which gives so strong a positive influence to error, and makes its overflow so very slow and laborious an operation.

I know not the origin of the prejudice respecting the town of Nazareth; or what it was that gave rise to an aphorism of such sweeping universality, as that no good thing could come out of it. Perhaps in two, three, or more instances, individuals may have come out of it who threw a discredit over the place of their nativity by the profligacy of their actions. Hence an association between the very name of the town, and the villany of its inhabitants. The association forms into an opinion. The opinion is embodied into a proverb, and is transmitted in the shape of a hereditary prejudice to future generations. It is likely enough, that many instances could have been appealed to, of people from the town of Nazareth, who gave evidence in their characters and lives against the prejudice in question. But it is not enough that evidence be offered by the one party. It must be attended to by the other. The disposition to resist it must be got over. The love of truth and justice must prevail over that indolence which likes to repose, without disturbance, in its present convictions; and over that malignity which, I fear, makes a dark and hostile impression of others, too congenial to many hearts. Certain it is, that when the strongest possible demonstration was offered in the person of him who was the finest example of the good and fair, it was found that the inveteracy of the prejudice could withstand it; and it is to be feared that with the question, "Can any good come out of Nazareth?" there were many in that day who shut their eyes and their affections against him.

Thus it was that the very name of a town, fastened an association of prejudice upon all its inhabitants. But this is only one example out of the many. A sect may be thrown into discredit by a very few of its individual specimens, and the same association be fastened upon all its members. A society may be thrown into discredit by the failure of one or two of its undertakings, and this will be enough to entail suspicion and ridicule upon all its future operations. A system may be thrown into discredit by the fanaticism and folly of some of its advocates, and it may be long before it emerges from the contempt of a precipitate and unthinking public, ever ready to follow the impulse of her former recollections; it may be long before it is reclaimed from obscurity by the eloquence of future defenders; and there may be the struggle and the perseverance of many years before the existing association, with all its train of obloquies, and disgusts, and prejudices, shall be overthrown.

A lover of truth is thus placed on the right field for the exercise of his principles. It is the field of his faith and of his patience, and in which he is called to a manly encounter with the enemies of his cause. He may have much to bear, and little but the mere force of principle to uphold him. But what a noble exhibition of mind, when this force is enough for it; when, though unsupported by the sympathy of other minds, it can rest on the truth and righteousness of its own principle; when it can select its object from among the thousand entanglements of error, and keep by it amidst all the clamours of hostility and contempt; when all the terrors of disgrace cannot alarm it; when all the levities of ridicule cannot shame it; when all the scowl of opposition cannot overwhelm it.

There are some very fine examples of such a contest, and of such a triumph, in the history of Philosophy. In the progress of speculation, the doctrine of the *occult qual-*

ities fell into disrepute, and every thing that could be associated with such a doctrine was disgraced and borne down by the authority of the reigning school. When Sir Isaac Newton's Theory of Gravitation was announced to the world, if it had not the persecution of violence, it had at least the persecution of contempt to struggle with. It had the sound of an occult principle, and it was charged with all the bigotry and mysticism of the schoolmen. This kept it out for a time from the chairs and universities of Europe, and for years a kind of obscure and ignoble sectarianism was annexed to that name, which has been carried down on such a tide of glory to distant ages. Let us think of this, when Philosophers bring their names and their authority to bear upon us, when they pour contempt on the truth which we love, and on the system which we defend; and as they fasten their epithets upon us, let us take comfort in thinking that we are under the very ordeal through which Philosophy herself had to pass, before she achieved the most splendid of her victories.

Sure I am, that the Philosophers of that age could not have a more impetuous contempt for the occult principle, which they conceived to lie in the doctrine of gravitation, than many of our present philosophers have for the equally occult principle which they conceive to lie in the all-subduing efficacy of the Christian Faith over every mind which embraces it. Each of these two doctrines is mighty in its pretensions. The one, asserts a principle to be now in operation, and which, reigning over the material world, gives harmony to all its movenents. The other, asserts a principle which it wants to put into operation, to apply to all minds, to carry round the globe, and to visit with its influence all the accessible dominions or the moral world. Mighty anticipation! It promises to rectify all disorder, to extirpate all vice, to dry up the source of all those sins, and sufferings, and sorrows,

which have spread such dismal and unseemly ravages over the face of society, to turn every soul from satan unto God; or in other words, to annihilate that disturbing force which has jarred the harmony of the moral world, and make all its parts tend obediently to the Deity as its centre and its origin.

But how can this principle be put into operation? How shall it be brought into contact with a soul at the distance of a thousand miles from the place in which we are now standing? I know no other conceivable way than sending a messenger in possession of the principle himself, and able to convey it into the mind of another by his powers of communication. The precept of "Go and preach the Gospel unto every creature," would obtain a very partial obedience indeed, if there was no actual moving of the preacher from one place or neighbourhood to another. Were he to stand still he might preach to some creatures; he might get a smaller or a larger number to assemble around him, and it is to be hoped that from the stationary pulpits of a Christian country the preaching of the word has been made to bear with efficacy on the souls of multitudes. But in reference to the vast majority of the world, that may still be said which was said by an Apostle in the infant state of our religion, how shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they preach except they be sent? It is the single circumstance of being sent, which forms the peculiarity so much contended for by one part of the British public, and so much resisted by the other. The Preacher who is so sent is, in good Latin, termed a *Missionary;* and such is the magical power which lies in the very sound of this hateful and obnoxious term, that it is no sooner uttered than a thousand associations of dislike and prejudice start into existence. And yet you would think it very strange: The term itself is perfectly correct, in point of etymology.

Many of those who are so clamorous in their hostility against it, feel no contempt for the mere act of preaching, sit with all decency and apparent seriousness under it, and have a becoming respect for the character of a preacher. Convert the Preacher into a Missionary, and all you have done is merely to graft upon the man's preaching the circumstance of locomotion. How comes it that the talent, and the eloquence, and the principle, which appeared so respectable in your eyes, so long as they stood still, lose all their respectability so soon as they begin to move? It is certainly conceivable, that the personal qualities which bear with salutary influence upon the human beings of one place, may pass unimpaired and have the same salutary influence upon the human beings of another. But this is a missionary process, and though unable to bring forward any substantial exception against the thing, they cannot get the better of the disgust excited by the term. They cannot release their understanding from the influence of its old associations, and these Philosophers are repelled from truth, and frightened out of the way which leads to it, by the bugbear of a name.

The precept is, "Go and preach the gospel to every creature under heaven." The people I allude to have no particular quarrel with the *preach*; but they have a mortal antipathy to the *go*—and should even their own admired preacher offer to go himself, or help to send others, he becomes a missionary, or the advocate of a mission; and the question of my text is set up in resistance to the whole scheme, "Can any good thing come out of it?"

I never felt myself in more favourable circumstances for giving an answer to the question, than I do at this moment, surrounded as I am by the members of a Society, which has been labouring for upwards of a century in the field of missionary exertion. It need no longer be taken up or treated as a speculative question. The question of

the text may, in reference to the subject now before us, be met immediately by the answer of the text, "Come and see." We call upon you to look to a set of actual performances, to examine the record of past doings, and like good philosophers as you are, to make the sober depositions of history carry it over the reveries of imagination and prejudice. We deal in proofs, not in promises; in practice, not in profession; in experience, not and in experiment. The Society whose cause I am now appointed to plead in your hearing, is to all intents and purposes a Missionary Society. It has a claim to all the honour, and must just submit to all the disgrace which such a title carries along with it. It has been in the habit for many years of hiring preachers and teachers, and may be convicted times without number, of the act of sending them to a distance. What the precise distance is I do not understand to be of any signification to the argument; but even though it should, I fear that in the article of distance, our Society has at times been as extravagant as many of her neighbours. Her labours have been met with in other quarters of the world. They have been found among the haunts of savages. They have dealt with men in the very infancy of social improvement, and their zeal for proselytism has far outstript that sober preparatory management, which is so much contended for. Why, they have carried the Gospel message into climes on which Europe had never impressed a single trace of her boasted civilization. They have tried the species in the first stages of its rudeness and ferocity, nor did they keep back the offer of the Saviour from their souls, till art and industry had performed a sufficient part, and were made to administer in fuller abundance to the wants of their bodies. This process, which has been so much insisted upon, they did not wait for. They preached and they prayed at the very outset, and they put into exercise

all the weapons of their spiritual ministry. In a word, they have done all the fanatical and offensive things, which have been charged upon other missionaries. If there be folly in such enterprises as these, our Society has the accumulated follies of a whole century upon her forehead. She is among the vilest of the vile, and the same overwhelming ridicule which has thrown the mantle of ignominy over other Societies, will lay all her honours and pretensions in the dust.

We are not afraid of linking the claims of our Society with the general merits of the Missionary cause. With this cause she stands or falls. When the spirit of Missionary enterprise is afloat in the country, she will not be neglected among the multiplicity of other objects. She will not suffer from the number or the activity of kindred Societies. They who conceive alarm upon this ground, have not calculated upon the productive powers of benevolence. They have not meditated deeply upon the operation of this principle, nor do they conceive how a general impulse given to the Missionary spirit, may work the two fold effect of multiplying the number of Societies, and of providing for each of them more abundantly than ever.

The fact is undeniable. In this corner of the empire there is an impetuous and overbearing contempt for every thing connected with the name of Missionary. The cause has been out-raged by a thousand indecencies. Every thing like the coolness of the philosophical spirit has been banished from one side of the controversy, and all the epithets of disgrace, which a perverted ingenuity could devise, have been unsparingly lavished on the noblest benefactors of the species. We have reason to believe that this opposition is not so extensive, nor so virulent in England. It is due to certain provincial associations, and may be accounted for. It is most a Scottish peculiarity;

and while, with our neighbours in the South, it is looked upon as a liberal and enlightened cause; as a branch of that very principle which abolished the Slave Trade of Africa; as one of the wisest, and likeliest experiments, which in this age of benevolent enterprise, is now making for the interests of the world; as a scheme ennobled by the patronage of royality; supported by the contributions of opulence; sanctified by the prayers and the wishes of philanthropy; assisted by men of the first science, and the first scholarship; carrying into execution by as hardy adventurers as ever trod the desert in quest of novelty; and enriching grammar, geography, and natural knowledge, by the discoveries they are making every year, as to the statistics of all countries, and the peculiarities of all languages; while, I say, such are the dignified associations thrown around the Missionary cause in England; in this country I am sorry to say a very different set of collaterals is annexed to it. A great proportion of our nobility, gentry, and clergy look upon it as a very low and drivelling concern; as a visionary enterprise, and that no good thing can come out of it; as a mere dreg of sectarianism, and which none but sectarians, or men who should have been sectarians, have any relish or respect for. The torrent of prejudice runs strongly against it, and the very name of Missionary excites the most nauseous antipathy, in the hearts of many, who, in other departments, approve themselves to be able, and candid, and reflecting inquirers.

We have no doubt that in the course of years all this will pass away. But reason and experience are slow in their operation; and, in the mean time, we count it fair to neutralize, if possible, one prejudice by another; to school down a Scottish antipathy by a Scottish predilection, and to take shelter from the contempt that is now so wantonly pouring on the best of causes under the respected name of a Society, which has earned by the services of a hun-

dred years, the fairest claims on the gratitude and veneration of all our countrymen. Come, and see the effect of her Missionary exertions. It is palpable, and near at hand. It lies within the compass of many a summer tour; and tell me, ye children of fancy, who expatiate with a delighted eye over the wilds of our mountain scenery, if it be not a dearer and a worthier exercise still, to contemplate the habits of her once ragged and wandering population. What would they have been at this moment, had Schools, and Bibles, and Ministers, been kept back from them? and had the men of a century ago been deterred by the flippancies of the present age, from the work of planting chapels and seminaries in that neglected land? The ferocity of their ancestors would have come down unsoftened and unsubdued to the existing generation. The darkening spirit of hostility would still have lowered upon us from the North; and these plains, now so peaceful and so happy, would have lain open to the fury of merciless invaders. O ye soft and sentimental travellers, who wander so securely over this romantic land, you are right to choose the season when the angry elements of nature are asleep! But what is it that has charmed to their long repose the more dreadful elements of human passion and human injustice? What is it that has quelled the boisterous spirit of her natives?—and while her torrents roar as fiercely, and her mountain brows look as grimly as ever, what is that which has thrown so softening an influence over the minds and manners of her living population?

I know not that there are several causes; but sure I am, that the civilizing influence of our Society has had an important share. If it be true that our country is indebted to her Schools and her Bibles for the most intelligent and virtuous peasantry in Europe, let it never be forgotten that the Schools in the establishment of our Society

are nearly equal to one-third of all the parishes in Scotland; that these schools are chiefly to be met with in the Highland district; that they bear as great a proportion to the Highland population, as all our parochial seminaries do to all our population; or, in other words, had the local convenience for the attendance of scholars been as great as in other parts of the country, the apparatus set a going by our Society, for the education of the Highland peasantry, would have been as effective as the boasted provision of the legislature, for the whole of Scotland.*

* This want of local convenience for the attendance of scholars, is the chief difficulty which our Society has to struggle with. The number of scholars bears to the population the proportion stated in the text; but think of the broad surface of a thinly peopled country, intersected with deep bays, and crossed in every direction by the natural barriers of lakes and mountains. There are only two ways in which education can be carried over the face of a country so peculiarly formed. The first way is, by the multiplication of stationary points, from which learning may emanate among the children in distinct neighbourhoods. The second way is, by the operation of circulating schools, which describe at intervals the blank spaces that are placed beyond the reach of stationary schools. In the present situation of the Highlands, both of these methods are putting into operation; and both are entitled to the support and patronage of the public. But without wishing to withdraw a single farthing from the latter of these methods, no one will deny that the former, if it could be put into operation, is the most effectual, for the full and regular education of the Highlanders. A fixed school, operating at all seasons, will do more for its neighbourhood, than can be done by a moveable apparatus set up only at intervals, and transferring itself at the end of a few months to other scenes, and to other neighbourhoods. Let us aim, therefore, at the multiplication of the fixed points; but a mighty sum will be necessary before such a system is completed; and in the mean time, let not the population of the intermediate spaces be abandoned. Let the cheapest and readiest expedient that offers for their education be adopted, and let the public hold forth a liberal hand to the Society for circulating schools. But what is to hinder us to combine with this, the gradual extension of the system of fixed, and regular education? The parochial schools furnish us with so many fixed points. The Society I am now pleading for, furnish us so many more. The very existence of the Gaelic Society, is a proof both of the extent and multiplicity of those intermediate spaces, over which they are operating with so much efficiency. Now the precise ground upon which we lay claim to the support of the public, is, that we want to scatter a few more stationary schools over these intermediate spaces —not to supersede the labours of the other Society; for the period of time at which this can be possibly accomplished, is still at an indefinite distance from us

I pass over the attempts of our Society to introduce the knowledge of the arts and the habits of useful industry among them. I have not room for every thing. And to reclaim, if possible, the prejudices of those who I fear have little sympathy with the wants of the ever-during soul, I have been lingering all the while upon the inferior ground of temporal advantage. But I may detain you for hours upon this ground, and after all I have said about a more peaceful neighbourhood, and a more civilised peasantry, I may positively have said nothing upon the essential merits of the cause. I can conceive the wish of his present Majesty, that every one in his dominions may be able to read the Bible, to meet an echo in every bosom.

—but by narrowing the ground of their operation, to enable them to do more complete justice to the mighty remainder, on which they have every prospect of expatiating for years, and generations to come; to make the task more commensurate to their means, and enable them to circulate with greater frequency and effect, over those remoter tracts, which we have as yet no immediate prospect of reaching.

Who would not give all jealousy to the wind, when they see how beautifully suited the operations of these two distinct societies are to one another? Circulate, with all possible activity, among the interjacent spaces on the one hand, but do not give up the prospect of permanent establishments in these spaces, on the other. The last is the province of our Society, and is advanced as our distinct claim upon the generosity of the public. We lay claim to this generosity; and what is more, we stand in need of it. It is not true that we do not teach the Gaelic to our Highland scholars. The instructions given to every Schoolmaster, and the Reports of the Committees of Presbyteries, upon the examination of scholars, form a distinct refutation to the impression which has got abroad upon this subject. Strange that this Society should be charged with a hostility to Gaelic education, to whose exertion and whose patronage the Highlands of Scotland are indebted for the existence of the Gaelic Bible. On the other hand, it is not true that our funds are so ample as to make us independent of any appeals that can be made to the generosity of the public. Our expenditure is at this moment pressing upon our resources. We have done much. There are hundreds of Schools regularly supported by us; but we appeal to the very existence of other Societies for the fact, that we have still much to do. We appeal to the press of applications for more Schools, and more Schoolmasters, and more Salaries. These applications come upon us every year, and the painful necessity we are under of refusing many of them, proves to a demonstration, that the want of pecuniary aid is the only limit to the usefulness of our exertions.

But why? Because the very habit of reading implies a more intelligent people, and must stand associated in every mind with habits of order, and comfort, and decency. But separate these from the religious principle, and what are they? At the very best they are the virtues of a life; their office is to scatter a few fleeting joys over a short and uncertain pilgrimage, and to deck a temporary scene with blessings, which are to perish and be forgotten. No! in our attempts to carry into effect the principle of being all things to all men, let us never exalt that which is subordinate; let us never give up our reckoning upon eternity, or be ashamed to own it as our sentiment, that though schools were to multiply, though Missionaries were to labour, and all the decencies and accomplishments of social life were to follow in their train, the great object would still be unattained, so long as the things of the Holy Spirit were unrelished and undiscerned among them, and they wanted that knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ, which is life everlasting. This is the ground upon which every Christian will rest the vindication of every Missionary enterprise; and this is the ground upon which he may expect to be abandoned by the infidel, who laughs at piety: or the lukewarm believer, who dreads to be laughed at for the extravagance to which he carries it. The Christian is not for giving up the social virtues; but the open enemy and the cold friend of the gospel are for giving up piety; and while they garnish all that is right and amiable in humanity, with the unsubstantial praises of their eloquence, they pour contempt upon that very principle which forms our best security for the existence of virtue in the world. We say nothing that can degrade the social virtues in the estimation of men; but by making them part of religion, we exalt them above all that poet or moralist can do for them. We give them God for their object, and for their end the grandeur of eternity.

No! it is not the Christian who is the enemy of social virtue; it is he who sighs in all the ecstacy of sentiment over it, at the very time that he is digging away its foundation, and wreaking on that piety which is its principle, the cruelty of his scorn.

It is very well in its place to urge the civilizing influence of a Missionary Society. But this is not the main object of such an institution. It is not the end. It is only the accompaniment. It is a never-failing collateral, and may be used as a lawful instrument in fighting the battles of the Missionary cause. It is right enough to contest it with our enemies at every one point of advantage; and for this purpose to descend, if necessary, to the very ground on which they have posted themselves. But, when so engaged, let us never forget the main elements of our business; for there is a danger, that when turning the eye of our antagonist to the lovely picture of peace, and industry, and cultivation, raised by many a Christian Missionary, among the wilds of heathenism, we turn it away from the very marrow and substance of our undertaking; the great aim of which is to preach Christ to sinners, and to rear human souls to a beauteous and never fading immortality.

The wish of our pious and patriotic king, that every man in his dominions might be able to read the Bible, has circulated through the land. It has been commented upon with eloquence; and we doubt not, that something like the glow of a virtuous sensibility has been awakened by it. But let us never forget that in the breasts of many, all this may be little better than a mere theatrical emotion. Give me the man who is in the daily habit of opening his Bible, who willingly puts himself into the attitude of a little child when he reads it, and casts an unshrinking eye over its information and its testimony. This is the way of giving effect and consistency to their boasted ad-

mitation of the royal sentiment. The mere admiration in itself indicates nothing. It may be as little connected with the sturdiness of principle as the finery of any poetical delusion. O! it is easy to combine a vague and general testimony to the Bible, with a disgusted feeling of antipathy to the methodism of its actual contents; and thousands can profess to make it their rallying point, who pour contempt upon its doctrines, and give the lie to the faithfulness of its sayings.

Let us put you to the trial. The Bible tells us, that "he who believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." It calls upon us "to preach the gospel to every creature," that every creature may believe it; for he who so "believeth shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Such is the mighty difference between believing and not believing. It makes all the difference between hell and heaven. He who believeth, hath passed from death even unto life; and the errand of the Missionary is to carry these overtures to the men of all languages, and all countries; that he may prevail upon them to make this transition. Some reject his overtures, and to them the gospel is the savour of death unto death. Others embrace them, and to them the gospel is the savour of life unto life. Whatever be his reception, he counts it his duty and his business to preach the gospel; and if he get some to hear, and others to forbear, he just fares as the Apostles did before him. Now, my brethren, have we got among the substantial realities of the Missionary cause. We have carried you forward from the accessaries to the radical elements of the business; and if you, offended at the hardness of these sayings, feel as if now we had got within the confines of methodism; then know that this feeling arose in your minds at the very moment that we got within the four corners of the Bible; and your fancied admiration of this

book, however exquisitely felt or eloquently uttered, is nothing better than the wretched flummery of a sickly and deceitful imagination.

Our venerable Society has given the sanction of her example to the best and the dearest objects of Missionaries. Like others she has kept a wakeful eye over all that could contribute to the interests of the species. She has given encouragement to art and to industry, but she has never been diverted from the religion of the people as the chief aim of all her undertakings. To this end she has multiplied schools, and made the reading of the Scriptures the main acquirement of her scholars. The Bible is her school-book, and it is to her that the Highlands of Scotland owe the translation of the sacred record into their own tongue. She sends preachers as well as teachers among them. As she has made the reading of the word a practicable acquirement, so she has made the hearing of the word an accessible privilege. In short, she has set up what may be called a christian apparatus in many districts, which the Legislature of the country had left unprovided for. She is filling up the blanks which, among the scattered and extended parishes of the North, occur so frequently over the broad surface of a thinly peopled country. She has come in contact with those remoter groups and hamlets, which the influence of the Establishment did not reach. And she has multiplied her endowments at such a rate, that very many people have got christian instruction in its different branches as nearly, and as effectively to bear upon them, as in the more favoured districts of the land.

When a wealthy native of a Highland parish, penetrated with a feeling of the wants of his neighbours, erects a chapel, or endows a seminary among them, his benevolence is felt and acknowledged by all; and I am not aware of a single association which can disturb our moral

estimate of such a proceeding, or restrain the fulness of that testimony which is due to it. But should an individual, at a distance from the parish in question, do the same thing; should he, with no natural claim upon him, and without the stimulus of any of those affections, which the mere circumstance of vicinity is fitted to inspire; should he, I say, merely upon a moving representation of their necessities, devote his wealth to the same cause; what influence ought this to have upon our estimate of his character? Why, in all fairness, it should just lead us to infer a stronger degree of the principle of philanthropy, a principle which in his case was unaided by any local influence whatever, and which urged him to exertion, and to sacrifice, in the face of an obstacle which the other had not to contend with—the obstacle of distance. Now what one individual may be conceived to do for one parish, a number of individuals may do for a number of parishes. They may form into a society, and combine their energies and their means for the benefit of the whole country, and should that country lie at a distance, the only way in which it affects our estimate of their exertions, is by leading us to see in them a stronger principle of attachment to the species, and a more determined zeal for the object of their benevolence, in spite of the additional difficulties with which it is encumbered.

Now the principle does not stop here. In the instance before us, it has been carried from the metropolis of Scotland to the distance of her northern extremities. But tell me, why it might not be carried round the globe. This very Society has carried it over the Atlantic, and the very apparatus which she has planted in the Highlands and islands of our country, she has set a going more than once in the wilds of America. The very discipline which she has applied to her own population, she has brought to bear on human beings in other quarters of the world. She

has wrought with the same instruments upon the same materials, and as in sound philosophy it ought to have been expected, she has obtained the same result—a christian people rejoicing in the faith of Jesus, and ripening for heaven, by a daily progress upon earth, in the graces and accomplishments of the gospel. I have yet to learn what that is which should make the same teaching, and the same Bible, applicable to one part of the species, and not applicable to another. I am not aware of a single principle in the philosophy of man which points to such a distinction; nor do I know a single category in the science of human nature, which can assist me in drawing the landmark between those to whom Christianity may be given, and those who are unworthy or unfit for the participation of its blessings. I have been among illiterate peasantry, and I have marked how apt they were, in their narrow field of observation, to cherish a kind of malignant contempt for the men of another shire, or another country. I have heard of barbarians, and of their insolent disdain for foreigners. I have read of Jews, and of their unsocial and excluding prejudices. But I always looked upon these as the jealousies of ignorance, which science and observation had the effect of doing away, and that the accomplished traveller, liberalized by frequent intercourse with the men of other countries, saw through the vanity of all these prejudices, and disowned them. What the man of liberal philosophy is in sentiment, the Missionary is in practice. He sees in every man a partaker of his own nature, and a brother of his own species. He contemplates the human mind in the generality of its great elements. He enters upon the wide field of benevolence, and disdains those geographical barriers, by which little men would shut out one half of the species from the kind offices of the other. His business is with man, and let his localities be what they may, enough for his large and

noble heart, that he is bone of the same bone. To get at him, he will shun no danger, he will shrink from no privation, he will spare himself no fatigue, he will brave every element of heaven, he will hazard the extremities of every clime, he will cross seas, and work his persevering way through the briars and thickets of the wilderness. In perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by the heathen, in weariness and painfulness, he seeks after him. The cast and the colour are nothing to the comprehensive eye of a Missionary. His is the broad principle of good will to the children of men. His doings are with the species, and overlooking all the accidents of climate, or of country, enough for him, if the individual he is in quest of be a man—a brother of the same nature—with a body which a few years will bring to the grave, and a spirit that returns to the God who gave it.

But this man of large and liberal principles is a missionary; and this is enough to put to flight all admiration of him, and of his doings. I forbear to expatiate; but sure I am that certain philosophers of the day, and certain fanatics of the day, should be made to change places; if those only are the genuine philosophers who keep to principles in spite of names, and those only the genuine fanatics who are ruled by names instead of principles.

The Society for Propagating Christian knowledge in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, has every claim upon a religious public; and I trust that those claims will not be forgotten among the multiplicity of laudable and important objects, which are now afloat in this age of benevolent enterprise. She has all the experience and respectability and tried usefulness of age; may she have none of the infirmities of age. May she have nothing either of the rust or the indolence of an establishment about her. Resting on the consciousness of her own righteous, and strongly supported cause; may she look on the ope-

rations of other societies with complacency, and be jealous of none of them. She confers with them upon their common objects; she assists them with her experience, and when struggling with difficulties, they make their appeal to the generosity of the christian world, she nobly leads the way, and imparts to them with liberal hand, out of her own revenue. She has conferred lasting obligations upon the Missionary cause. She spreads over it the shelter of her venerable name, and by the answer of "come and see," to those who ask if any good thing can come out of it, she gives a practical refutation to the reasonings of all its adversaries. She redeems the best of causes from the unmerited contempt under which it labours, and she will be repaid. The religious public will not be backward to own the obligation. We are aware of the prevalence of the Missionary Spirit, and of the many useful directions in which it is now operating. But we are not afraid of the public being carried away from us. We know that there is room for all, that there are funds for all; and our policy is not to repress, but to excite the Missionary spirit, and then there will be a heart for all.

A

SERMON,

DELIVERED IN

THE TRON CHURCH, GLASGOW,

ON

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 19, 1817,

THE

DAY OF THE FUNERAL OF HER ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE

PRINCESS CHARLOTTE OF WALES.

BY

REV. THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D.
Minister of the Tron Church, Glasgow.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Sermon is the fruit of a very hurried and unlooked for exertion—and never was there any publication brought forward under circumstances of greater reluctancy, and with a more honest feeling of unpreparedness, on the part of the author. The truth is, that he was at a great distance from home, when the urgency of the public demand for his personal appearance on the nineteenth of November, reached him, and that so late, that he had no other resource than to write for the pulpit during the intervals, and after the exhaustion of a very rapid and fatiguing journey. It is true that he might revise. But to revise such a composition, would be to re-make it; and he has chosen rather to bring it forward, and that as nearly as possible, in the literal terms of its delivery.

But it may be asked, if so unfit for the public eye, why make it public? It may be thought by many, that the avowal is not a wise one. But wisdom ought never to be held in reverence separately from truth; and it would be disguising the real motive, were it concealed, that a very perverse misconception which has gone abroad respecting one passage of the Sermon, and which has found its way into many of the newspapers, is the real and impelling cause of the step that has been taken; and that, had it not been for the spread of such a misconception, there never would have been obtruded on the public, a performance written on a call of urgent necessity, and most assuredly without the slightest anticipation of authorship.

But, it may be said, does not such a measure as this bring the pulpit into a state of the most degrading subordination to the diurnal press, since there is not a single sermon which cannot be so reported, as, without the literality of direct falsehood, to convey through the whole country, all the injuries of a substantial misrepresentation; and if a minister should condescend publicly to notice every such random and ephemeral statement, he might thereby incessantly involve himself in the most helpless and harassing of all controversy?

Now, in opposition to this, let it be observed, that a person placed in this difficult and disagreeable predicament, may advert for once to such a provocation, and that for the express purpose, that he may never have to do it again. He may count it enough to make one decisive exposure of the injustice which can be done in this way to a public instructor, and then hold himself acquitted of every similar attempt in all time coming. He thereby raises a sort of abid-

ing or monumental antidote, which may serve to neutralize the mischief of any future attack, or future insinuation. By this one act, though he may not silence the obloquies of the daily press, he has at least purchased for himself the privilege of standing unmoved by all the mistakes, or by all the malignities which may proceed from it.

Yet, it is no more than justice to a numerous and very important class of writers, to state it as our conviction of the great majority of them, that they feel the dignity and responsibility of their office, and hold it to be the highest point of professional honour, ever to maintain the most gentlemanly avoidance of all that is calculated to wound the feelings of an unoffending individual.

There is one temptation, however, to which the editors of this department of literature are peculiarly liable, which may be briefly adverted to, and the influence of which, may be observed to extend even to a higher class of journalists. There is an eagerness to transmute every thing into metal of their own peculiar currency—there is an extreme avidity to lay hold of every utterance, and to send it abroad, tinged with the colouring of their own party—there is a ravenous desire of approbation extending itself to every possible occurrence, and to every one individual whom they would like to enlist under the banners of their own partisanship, which, for their own credit, they would be more careful to repress, did they perceive with sufficient force, and sufficient distinctness, that it makes them look more like desperadoes of a sinking cause, than the liberal and honest expounders of public politics and literature, which claim so respectable a portion of the intelligence of the country.

The writer of this Sermon has only to add, that he does not know how a sorer imputation could have been devised against the heart and the principles of a clergyman, than that, on the tender and hallowed day of a nation's repose from all the sordidness and all the irritations of party, he should have made the pulpit a vehicle of invective against any administration; or that, after mingling his tears with those of his people, over the untimely death of one so dear to us, he should have found room for any thing else than those lessons of general Christianity, by which an unsparing reproof is ministered to impiety, in whatever quarter it may be found—even that impiety which wears the very same features, and offers itself in the very same aspect, under all administrations.

SERMON.

"*For when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.*"—Isa. xxvi. 9.

I am sorry that I shall not be able to extend the application of this text beyond its more direct and immediate bearing on that event on which we are now met to mingle our regrets, and our sensibilities, and our prayers —that, occupied as we all are with the mournful circumstance that has bereft our country of one of its brightest anticipations, I shall not be able to clear my way to the accomplishment of what is, strictly speaking, the congregational object of an address from the pulpit, which ought, in every possible case, to be an address to the conscience —that, therefore, instead of the concerns of personal Christianity, which, under my present text, I might, if I had space for it, press home upon the attention of my hearers, I shall be under the necessity of restricting myself to that more partial application of the text which relates to the matters of public Christianity. It is upon this account, as well as upon others, that I rejoice in the present appointment, for the improvement of that sad and sudden visitation which has so desolated the hearts and the hopes of a whole people. I therefore feel more freedom in coming forward with such remarks as, to the eyes of

many, may wear a more public and even political complexion, than is altogether suited to the ministrations of the Sabbath. And yet I cannot but advert, and that in such terms of reproof as I think to be most truly applicable, to another set of men, whose taste for preaching is very much confined to these great and national occasions —who, habitually absent from church on the Sabbath, are yet observed, and that most prominently, to come together in eager and clustering attendance, on some interesting case of pathos or of politics—who in this way obtrude upon the general notice, their loyalty to an earthly sovereign, while, in reference to their Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, they scandalize all that is Christian in the general feeling, by their manifest contempt for him and for his ordinances—who look for the ready compliance of ministers, in all that can gratify their inclinations for pageantry, while for the real effective and only important business of ministers, they have just as little reverence as if it were all a matter of hollow and insignificant parade. It is right to share in the triumphs of successful, and to shed the tears of afflicted, patriotism. But it is also right to estimate according to its true character, the patriotism of those who are never known to offer one homage to Christianity, except when it is associated with the affairs of state, or with the wishes, and the commands, and the expectations of statesmen.

But the frivolous and altogether despicable taste of the men to whom I am alluding, must be entirely separated from such an occasion as the present. For, in truth, there never was an occasion of such magnitude, and at the same time of such peculiarity. There never was an occasion on which a matter of deep political interest was so blended and mixed up with matter of very deep and affecting tenderness. It does not wear the aspect of an affair of politics at all, but of and affair of the heart; and the nov-

el exhibition is now offered, of all party-irritations merging into one common and overwhelming sensibility. Oh! how it tends to quiet the agitations of every earthly interest and earthly passion when Death steps forward and demonstrates the littleness of them all—when he stamps a character of such affecting insignificance on all that we are contending for—when, as if to make known the greatness of his power in the sight of a whole country, he stalks in ghastly triumph over the might and the grandeur of its most august family, and singling out that member of it on whom the dearest hopes and the gayest visions of the people were suspended, he, by one fatal and resistless blow, sends abroad the fame of his victory and his strength, throughout the wide extent of an afflicted nation. He has indeed put a cruel and impressive mockery on all the glories of mortality. A few days ago, all looked so full of life, and promise, and security—when we read of the bustle of the great preparation—and were told of the skill and the talent that were pressed into the service—and heard of the goodly attendance of the most eminent in the nation—and how officers of state, and the titled dignitaries of the land, were charioted in splendour to the scene of expectation, as to the joys of an approaching holiday—yes, and we were told too, that the bells of the surrounding villages were all in readiness for the merry peal of gratulation, and that the expectant metropolis of our empire, on tiptoe for the announcement of her future monarch, had her winged couriers of despatch to speed the welcome message to the ears of her citizens, and that from her an embassy of gladness was to travel over all the provinces of the land; and the country, forgetful of all that she had suffered, was at length to offer the spectacle of one wide and rejoicing jubilee. O Death! thou hast indeed chosen the time and the victim, for demonstrating the grim ascendency of thy power over all the hopes and

fortunes of our species !—Our blooming Princess, whom fancy had decked with the coronet of these realms, and under whose gentle sway all bade so fair for the good and the peace of our nation, has he placed upon her bier! And, as if to fill up the measure of his triumph, has he laid by her side, that babe, who, but for him, might have been the monarch of a future generation ; and he has done that, which by no single achievement he could otherwise have accomplished—he has sent forth over the whole of our land, the gloom of such a bereavement as cannot be replaced by any living descendant of royalty—he has broken the direct succession of the monarchy of England —by one and the same disaster, has he wakened up the public anxieties of the country, and sent a pang as acute as that of the most woful domestic visitation, into the heart of each of its families.

In the prosecution of the following discourse, as I have already stated, I shall satisfy myself with a very limited application of the text. I shall in the first place, offer a few remarks on that branch of the righteousness of practical Christianity, which consists in the duty that subjects owe to their governors. And in the second place, I shall attempt to improve the present great national disaster, to the object of impressing upon you, that, under all our difficulties and all our fears, it is the righteousness of the people alone which will exalt and perpetuate the nation ; and that therefore, if this great interest be neglected, the country, instead of reaping improvement from the judgments of God, is in imminent danger of being utterly overwhelmed by them.

I. But here let me attempt the difficult task of rightly dividing the Word of Truth—and premise this head of discourse, by admitting that I know nothing more hateful than the crouching spirit of servility. I know not a single class of men more unworthy of reverence, than the

base and interested minions of a court. I know not a set of pretenders who more amply deserve to be held out to the chastisement of public scorn, than they who, under the guise of public principle, are only aiming at personal aggrandizement. This is one corruption. But let us not forget that there is another—even a spurious patriotism which would proscribe loyalty as one of the virtues altogether. Now, I cannot open my Bible, without learning that loyalty is one branch of the righteousness of practical Christianity. I am not seeking to please men, but God, when I repeat his words in your hearing—that you should honour the King—that you should obey Magistrates—that you should meddle not with those who are given to change—that you should be subject to principalities and powers—that you should lead a quiet and a peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. This, then, is a part of the righteousness which it is our business to teach, and sure I am that it is a part of righteousness which the judgment now dealt out to us, should, of all others, dispose you to learn. I know not a virtue more in harmony with the present feelings, and afflictions, and circumstances of the country, than that of a steadfast and determined loyalty. The time has been, when such an event as the one that we are now assembled to deplore, would have put every restless spirit into motion, and set a guilty ambition upon its murderous devices, and brought powerful pretenders with their opposing hosts of vassalage into the field, and enlisted towns and families under the rival banners of a most destructive fray of contention, and thus have broken up the whole peace and confidence of society. Let us bless God that these days of barbarism are now gone by. But the vessel of the state is still exposed to many agitations. The sea of politics is a sea of storms, on which the gale of human passions would make her founder, were it not for the guidance of human

principle; and, therefore, the truest policy of a nation is to Christianize her subjects, and to disseminate among them the influence of religion. The most skilful arrangement for rightly governing a state, is to scatter among the governed, not the terrors of power—not the threats of jealous and alarmed authority—not the demonstrations of sure and ready vengeance held forth by the rigour of an offended law. These may, at times, be imperiously called for. But a permanent security against the wild outbreakings of turbulence and disaster, is only to be attained by diffusing the lessons of the Gospel throughout the great mass of our population—even those lessons which are utterly and diametrically at antipodes with all that is criminal and wrong in the spirit of political disaffection. The only radical counteraction to this evil is to be found in the spirit of Christianity; and though animated by such a spirit, a man may put on the intrepidity of one of the old prophets, and denounce even in the ear of royalty the profligacies which may disgrace or deform it—though animated by such a spirit, he may lift his protesting voice in the face of an unchristian magistracy, and tell them of their errors—though animated by such a spirit, he, to avoid every appearance of evil, will neither stoop to the flattery of power, nor to the solicitations of patronage—and though all this may bear, to the superficial eye, a hard, and repulsive, and hostile aspect towards the established dignities of the land—yet forget not, that if a real and honest principle of Christianity lie at the root of this spirit, there exists within the bosom of such a man, a foundation of principle, on which all the lessons of Christianity will rise into visible and consistent exemplification. And it is he, and such as he, who will turn out to be the salvation of the country, when the hour of her threatened danger is approaching—and it is just in pro-

portion as you spread and multiply such a character that you raise within the bosom of the nation, the best security against all her fluctuations—and, as in every other department of human concerns, so will it be found, that, in this particular department, Christians are the salt of the earth, and Christianity the most copious and emanating fountain of all the guardian virtues of peace, and order, and patriotism.

The judgment under which we now labour, supplies, I think, one touching, and, to every good and christian mind, one powerful argument of loyalty. It is the distance of the prince from his people which feeds the political jealousy of the latter, and which by removing the former to a height of inaccessible grandeur, places him, as it were, beyond the reach of their sympathies. Much of that political rancour, which festers, and agitates, and makes such a tremendous appearance of noise and of hostility in our land, is due to the aggravating power of distance. If two of the deadliest political antagonists in our country, who abuse, and vilify, and pour forth their stormy eloquence on each other, whether in parliament or from the press, were actually to come into such personal and familiar contact, as would infuse into their controversy the sweetening of mere acquaintanceship, this very circumstance would disarm and do away almost all their violence. The truth is, that when one man rails against another across the table of a legislative assembly, or when he works up his fermenting imagination, and pens his virulent sentences against another, in the retirement of a closet—he is fighting against a man at a distance—he is exhausting his strength against an enemy whom he does not know—he is swelling into indignation, and into all the movements of what he thinks right and generous principle, against a chimera of his own apprehension; and a similar re-action comes back upon him from the quarter

that he has assailed, and thus the controversy thickens, and the delusion every day gets more impenetrable, and the distance is ever widening, and the breach is always becoming more hopeless and more irreparable; and all this between two men, who, if they had been in such accidental circumstances of juxtaposition, as could have let them a little more into one another's feelings, and to one another's sympathies, would at least have had all the asperities of their difference smoothed away by the mere softenings and kindlinesses of ordinary human intercourse.

Now let me apply this remark to the mutual state of sentiment which obtains between the different orders of the community. Among the rich, there is apt at times to rankle an injurious and unworthy impression of the poor —and just because these poor stand at a distance from them—just because they come not into contact with that which would draw them out into courteousness to their persons, and in benevolent attentions to their families. Among the poor, on the other hand, there is often a disdainful suspicion of the wealthy, as if they were actuated by a proud indifference to them and to their concerns, and, as if they were placed away from them at so distant and lofty an elevation as not to require the exercise of any of those cordialities, which are ever sure to spring in the bosom of man to man, when they come to know each other, and to have the actual sight of each other. But, let any accident place an individual of the higher before the eyes of the lower order, on the ground of their common humanity—let the latter be made to see that the former are akin to themselves in all the sufferings and in all the sensibilities of our common inheritance —let, for example, the greatest chieftain of the territory die, and the report of his weeping children, or of his distracted widow, be sent through the neighbourhood—or,

let an infant of his family be in suffering, and the mothers of the humble vicinity be run to for counsel and assistance —or, in any other way, let the rich, instead of being viewed by their inferiors through the dim and distant medium of that fancied interval which separates the ranks of society, be seen as heirs of the same frailty, and as dependent on the same sympathies with themselves—and, at that moment, all the floodgates of honest sympathy will be opened—and the lowest servants of the establishment will join in the cry of distress which has come upon their family—and the neighbouring cottagers, to share in their grief, have only to recognise them as the partakers of one nature, and to perceive an assimilation of feelings and of circumstances between them.

Let me further apply all this to the sons and the daughters of royalty. The truth is, that they appear to the public eye as stalking on a platform so highly elevated above the general level of society, that it removes them, as it were, from all the ordinary sympathies of our nature. And though we read at times of their galas, and their birthdays, and their drawing-rooms, there is nothing in all this to attach us to their interests and their feelings, as the inhabitants of a familiar home—as the members of an affectionate family. Surrounded as they are with the glare of a splendid notoriety, we scarcely recognise them as men and as women, who can rejoice, and weep, and pine with disease, and taste the sufferings of mortality, and be oppressed with anguish, and love with tenderness, and experience in their bosoms the same movements of grief or of affection that we do ourselves. And thus it is, that they labour under a real and heavy disadvantage. There is not, in their case, the counteraction of that kindly influence, to alleviate the weight or the malignity of prejudice, which men of a humbler station are ever sure to enjoy. In the case of a man whose name is hardly known beyond the

limits of his personal acquaintance, the tale of calumny that is raised against him extends not far beyond these limits; and, therefore, wherever it is heard, it meets with a something to blunt and to soften it, in those very cordialities which the familiar exhibition of him as a brother of our common nature is fitted to awaken. But it is not so with those in the elevated walks of society. Their names are familiar where there persons are unknown; and whatever malignity may attach to the one, circulates abroad, and is spread far beyond the limits of their possible intercourse with human beings, and meets with no kindly counteraction from our acquaintance with the other. And this may explain how it is, that the same exalted personage may, at one and the same time, be suffering under a load of most unmerited obloquy from the wide and the general public, and be to all his familiar domestics an object of the most enthusiastic devotedness and regard.

Now, if through an accidental opening, the public should be favoured with a domestic exhibition—if, by some overpowering visitation of Providence upon an illustrious family, the members of it should come to be recognised as the partakers of one common humanity with ourselves—if, instead of beholding them in their gorgeousness as princes, we look to them in their natural evolution of their sensibilities as men—if the stately palace should be turned into a house of mourning—in one word, if death should do what he has already done, he has met the Princess of England in the prime and promise of her days, and as she was moving onward on her march to a hereditary throne, he has laid her at his feet. Ah! my brethren, when the imagination dwells on that bed where the remains of departed youth and departed infancy are lying —when, instead of crowns and canopies of grandeur, it looks to the forlorn husband, and the weeping father, and the human feelings which agitate their bosom, and the

human tears which flow down their cheeks, and all such symptoms of deep affliction as bespeaks the workings of suffering and dejected nature—what ought to be, and what actually is, the feeling of the country at so sad an exhibition? It is just the feeling of the domestics and the labourers at Clarement. All is soft and tender as womanhood. Nor is there a peasant in our land, who is not touched to the very heart when he thinks of the unhappy Stranger who is now spending his days in grief and his nights in sleeplessness—as he mourns alone in his darkened chamber, and refuses to be comforted—as he turns in vain for rest to his troubled feelings, and cannot find it—as he gazes on the memorials of an affection that blessed the brightest, happiest, shortest year of his existence—as he looks back on the endearments of the bygone months, and the thought that they have forever fleeted away from him, turns all to agony—as he looks forward on the blighted prospect of this world's pilgrimage, and feels that all which bound him to existence, is now torn irretrievably away from him! There is not a British heart that does not feel to this interesting visitor, all the force and all the tenderness of a most affecting relationship; and go, where he may, will he ever be recognised and cherished as a much-loved member of the British family.

It is in this way that through the avenue of a nation's tenderness, we can estimate the strength and the steadfastness of a nation's loyalty. On minor questions of the constitution, we may storm, and rave, and look at each other a little ferociously—and it was by some such appearance as this, that he, who, in the days of his strength, was the foulest and most formidable of all our enemies, said of the country in which we live, that, torn by factions, it was going rapidly to dissolution. Yet these are but the skirmishings of a pettier warfare—the move-

ments of nature and of passion, in a land of freemen—the harmless contents of men pulling in opposite ways at some of the smaller ropes in the tackling of our great national vessel. But look to these men, in the time of need and the hour of suffering—look to them now, when in one great and calamitous visitation, the feeling of every animosity is overborne—look to them now, when the darkness is gathering, and the boding cloud of disaster hangs over us, and some chilling fear of insecurity is beginning to circulate in whispers through the land—look to them now, when in the entombment of this sad and melancholy day, the hopes of more than half a century are to be interred—look to them now, when from one end of the country to the other, there is the mourning of a very great and sore lamentation, so that all who pass by, may say, this is a grievous mourning to the people of the land. Oh! is it possible that these can be other than honest tears, or that tears of pity can on such an emergency as the present, be other than tears of patriotism. Who does not see this principle sitting in visible expression on the general countenance of the nation—that the people are sound at heart, and that with this, as the mainsheet of our dependence, we may still, under the blessing of God, weather and surmount all the difficulties which threaten us.

II. I now proceed to the second head of discourse, under which I was to attempt such an improvement of this great national disaster, as might enforce the lesson, that under every fear and every difficulty, it is the righteousness of the people alone which will exalt and perpetuate a nation; and that, therefore, if this great interest be neglected, instead of learning any thing from the judgments of God, we are in imminent danger of being utterly overwhelmed by them.

Under my first head I restricted myself exclusively to

the virtue of loyalty, which is one of the special, but I most willingly admit, nay and most earnestly contend, is also one of the essential attributes of righteousness. But there is a point on which I profess myself to be altogether at issue with a set of men, who composed, at one time, whatever they do now, a very numerous class of society. I mean those men, who, with all the ostentation, and all the intolerance of loyalty, evinced an utter indifference either to their own personal religion or to the religion of the people who were around them—who were satisfied with the single object of keeping the neighbourhood in a state of political tranquillity—who, if they could only get the population to be quiet, cared not for the extent of profaneness or of profligacy that was among them—and who, while they thought to singalize themselves in the favour of their earthly king, by keeping down every turbulent or rebellious movement among his subjects, did in fact, by their own conspicuous example, lead them and cheer them on in their rebellion against the king of heaven—and, as far as the mischief could be wrought by the contagion of their personal influence, these men of loyalty did what in them lay, to spread a practical contempt for Christianity, and for all its ordinances, throughout the land.

Now, I would have such men to understand, if any such there be within the sphere of my voice, that it is not with their loyalty that I am quarrelling. I am only telling them, that this single attribute of righteousness will never obtain a steady footing in the hearts of the people, except on the ground of a general principle of righteousness. I am telling them how egregiously they are out of their own politics, in ever thinking that they can prop the virtue of loyalty in a nation, while they are busily employed, by the whole instrumentality of their example and of their doings, in sapping the very foundation upon which it is reared. I am telling them, that if they wish to see

loyalty in perfection, and such loyalty, too, as reqiures not any scowling vigilance of theirs to uphold it, they must look to the most moral, and orderly, and christianized districts of the country. I am merely teaching them a lesson of which they seem to be ignorant, that if you loosen the hold of Christianity over the hearts of the population, you pull down from their ascendency all the virtues of Christianity, of which loyalty is one. Yes, and I will come yet a little closer, and take a look of that loyalty which exists in the shape of an isolated principle in their own bosoms. I should like to gauge the dimensions of this loyalty of theirs, in its state of disjunction from the general principle of Christianity. I wish to know the kind of loyalty which characterizes the pretenders to whom I am alluding—the men who have no value for preaching, but as it stands associated with the pageantry of state—the men who would reckon it the most grievous of all heresies, to be away from church on some yearly day of the king's appointment, but are seldom within its walls on the weekly day of God's appointment—the men who, if ministers were away from their post of loyalty, on an occasion like the present, would, without mercy, and without investigation, denounce them as suspicious characters; but who, when we are at the post of piety, dispensing the more solemn ordinances of Christianity, openly lead the way in that crowded and eager emigration, which carries half the rank and opulence of the town away from us. What, oh! what is the length, and the breadth, and the height, and the depth of this vapouring, swaggering, high-sounding loyalty!—It is nothing better than the loyalty of political subalterns, in the low game of partisanship, or of whippers-in to an existing administration—it is not the loyalty which will avail us in the day of danger—it is not to them that we need to look, in the evil hour of a country's visitation;—but to those right-hearted, sound-think-

ing christian men, who, without one interest to serve, or one hope to forward, honour their king, because they fear their God.

Let me assure such a man, if such a man there is within the limits of this assembly—that, keen as his scent may be after political heresies, the deadliest of all such heresies lies at his own door—that there is not to be found, within the city of our habitation, a rottener member of the community than himself—that, withering as he does by his example the principle which lies at the root of all national prosperity, it is he, and such as he, who stands opposed to the best and the dearest objects of loyalty—and if ever that shall happen, which it is my most delightful confidence that God will avert from us and from our children's children to the latest posterity—if ever the wild frenzy of revolution shall run through the ranks of Britain's population, these are the men who will be the most deeply responsible for all its atrocities and for all its horrors.*

Having thus briefly adverted to one of the causes of

* I cannot but advert here to a delicate impediment which lies in the way of the faithful exercise of the ministerial functions, from the existence of two great political parties, which would monopolize between them, all the sentiments and all the services of the country. Is it not a very possible thing that the line of demarcation between these parties, may not coalesce, throughout all its extent, with the sacred and immutable line of distinction between right and wrong?—and ought not this latter line to stand out so clearly and so prominently to the eye of the christian minister, that in the act of dealing around him the reproofs and the lessons of Christianity, the former line should be away from his contemplation altogether? But it is thus that, with the most scrupulous avoidance both of the one and of the other species of partisanship, he may in the direct and conscientious discharge of the duties of his office, deliver himself in such a way as to give a kind of general and corporate offence to one political denomination; and, what is still more grievous, as to be appropriated by the men of another denomination, with whom in their capacity as politicians he desires no fellowship whatever, and whose applauses of him in this capacity are in every way most odious and insufferable.

It appears to us, that a christian minister cannot keep himself in the true path of consistency at all, without refusing to each of the parties, all right of appropriation. Their line of demarcation is not his line. Their objects are not his

impiety and consequent disloyalty, I shall proceed to offer a few remarks on the great object of teaching the people

objects. He asks no patronage from the one—he asks no favour from the other, except that they shall not claim kindred with him. He may suffer, at times, from the intolerance of the unworthy underlings of the former party; but never will his sensations of distaste, for the whole business of party politics, become so intense and so painful, as when the hosannas of the latter party threaten to rise around him.

We often hear from each, and more particularly from one of these parties, of the virtue and the dignity of independence. The only way it appears to us in which a man can sustain the true and complete character of independence, is to be independent of both. He who cares for neither of them, is the only independent man; and to him only belongs the privilege of crossing and re-crossing their factitious line of demarcation, just as he feels himself impelled by the high paramount and subordinating principles of the Christianity which he professes. In the exercise of this privilege, I here take the opportunity of saying, that if the chastisement of public scorn should fall on those who, under the disguise of public principle, have *found* a personal aggrandisement for themselves, it should fall with equal severity on those who, under the same disguise, are *seeking* for precisely the same object—that if there be some men in the country who care not for the extent of profaneness and profligacy that is among the people, provided they can only keep them *quiet*, there are also some men who care not for their profaneness or their profligacy, provided they can only keep them *unquiet*—who bear no other regard to the people than merely as an instrument of annoyance against an existing administration—who can shed their serpent tears over their distresses, and yet be inwardly grieved, should either a favourable season or reviving trade disappoint their boding speculation—who, in the face of undeniable common sense, can ascribe to political causes, such calamities as are altogether due to what is essential and uncontrollable in the circumstances of the country—and who, if on the strength of misrepresentation and artifice they could only succeed in effecting the great object of their own instalment into office, and the dispossession of their antagonists, would prove themselves, then, to be as indifferent to the comfort, as they show themselves now to be utterly indifferent to the religion and the virtue of the country's population.

But turning away from the beggarly elements of such a competition as this, let us remark, that on the one hand, a religious administration will never take offence at a minister who renders a pertinent reproof to any set of men, even though they should happen to be their own agents or their own underlings; and that, on the other hand, a minister who is actuated by the true spirit of his office, will never so pervert or so prostitute his functions, as to descend to the humble arena of partisanship. He is the faithful steward of such things as are profitable for reproof, and for doctrine, and for correction, and for instruction in righteousness. His single object with the men who are within reach of his hearing, is, that they should come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved. In the fulfilment of this object, he is not the servant of any administration—though he

righteousness, not so much in a general and didactic manner, as in the way of brief, and, if possible, of memorable illustration—gathering my argument from the present event, and availing myself, at the same time, of such principles as have been advanced in the course of the preceding observations.

My next remark, then, on this subjct, will be taken from a sentiment, of which I think you must all on the present occasion feel the force and the propriety. Would it not have been most desirable could the whole population of the city have been admitted to join in the solemn services of the day? Do you not think that they are precisely such services as would have spread a loyal and patriotic influence among them? Is it not experimentally the case, that, over the untimely grave of our fair Princess, the meanest of the people would have shed as warm and plentiful a tribute of honest sensibility as the most refined and delicate among us? And, I ask, is it not unfortunate, that, on the day of such an affecting, and, if I may so style it, such a national exercise, there should not have been twenty more churches with twenty more ministers, to have contained the whole crowd of eager and interested listeners? A man of mere loyalty, without one

certainly renders such a service to the state as will facilitate the work of governing to all administrations—as will bring a mighty train of civil and temporal blessings along with it—and in particular, as will diffuse over the whole sphere of his influence, a loyalty as steadfast as the friends of order, and as free from every taint of political servility, as the most genuine friends of freedom can desire.

There is only one case in which it is conceived that the partisanship of a christian minister is at all justifiable. Should the government of our country ever fall into the hands of an infidel or demi-infidel administration--should the men at the helm of affairs be the patrons of all that is unchristian in the sentiment and literature of the country--should they offer a violence to its religious establishments, and thus attempt what we honestly believe would reach a blow to the piety and the character of our population—then, I trust that the language of partisanship will resound from many of the pulpits of the land—and that it will be turned in one stream of pointed invective against such a ministry as this—till, by the force of public opinion, it be swept away as an intolerable nuisance, from the face of our kingdom.

other accomplishment, will, I am sure, participate in a regret so natural; but couple this regret with the principle, that the only way in which the loyalty of the people can effectually be maintained, is on the basis of their Christianity, and then the regret in question embraces an object still more general—and well were it for us, if, amid the insecurity of families, and the various fluctuations of fortune and of arrangement that are taking place in the highest walks of society, the country were led, by the judgment with which it has now been visited, to deepen the foundation of all its order and of all its interests, in the moral education of its people. Then indeed the text would have its literal fulfilment. When the judgments of God are in the earth, the rulers of the world would lead the inhabitants thereof to learn righteousness.

In our own city, much in this respect remains to be accomplished; and I speak of the great mass of our city and suburb population, when I say, that through the week they lie open to every rude and random exposure—and when Sabbath comes, no solemn appeal to the conscience, no stirring recollections of the past, no urgent calls to resolve against the temptations of the future, come along with it. It is undeniable, that within the compass of a few square miles, the daily walk of the vast majority of our people is beset with a thousand contaminations; and whether it be on the way to the market, or on the way to the workshop, or on the way to the crowded manufactory, or on the way to any one resort of industry that you choose to condescend upon, or on the way to the evening home, where the labours of a virtuous day should be closed by the holy thankfulness of a pious and affectionate family; be it in passing from one place to another; or be it amid all the throng of sedentary occupations: there is not one day of the six, and not one hour of one of these days, when frail and unsheltered man is not plied by the many allurements of a world lying in wickedness—when evil

communications are not assailing him with their corruptions—when the full tide of example does not bear down upon his purposes, and threaten to sweep all his purity and all his principle away from him. And when the seventh day comes, where, I would ask, are the efficient securities that ought to be provided against all those inundations of profligacy which rage without control through the week, and spread such a desolating influence among the morals of the existing generation?—Oh! tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon—this seventh day, on which it would require a whole army of labourers to give every energy which belongs to them, to the plenteous harvest of so mighty a population, witnesses more than one half of the people precluded from attending the house of God, and wandering every man after the counsel of his own heart, and in the sight of his own eyes—on this day, the ear of heaven is assailed with a more audacious cry of rebellion than on any other, and the open door of invitation plies with its welcome, the hundreds and the thousands who have found their habitual way to the haunts of depravity. And is there no room, then, to wish for twenty more churches, and twenty more ministers—for men of zeal and of strength, who might go forth among these wanderers, and compel them to come in—for men of holy fervour, who might set the terrors of hell and the free offer of salvation before them—for men of affection, who might visit the sick, the dying, and the afflicted, and cause the irresistible influence of kindness to circulate at large among their families—for men, who, while they fastened their most intense aim on the great object of preparing sinners for eternity, would scatter along the path of their exertions all the blessings of order, and contentment, and sobriety, and at length make it manifest as day, that the righteousness of the people is the only effectual antidote to a country's ruin—the only path to a country's glory?

My next remark shall be founded on a principle to

which I have already alluded—the desirableness of a more frequent intercourse between the higher and the lower orders of society; and what more likely to accomplish this, than a larger ecclesiastical accommodation?—not the scanty provision of the present day, by which the poor are excluded from the church altogether, but such a wide and generous system of accommodation, as that the rich and the poor might sit in company together in the house of God. It is this christian fellowship, which, more than any other tie, links so intimately together, the high and the low in country parishes. There is, however, another particular to which I would advert, and though I cannot do so without magnifying my office, yet I know not a single circumstance which so upholds the golden line of life among our agricultural population, as the manner in which the gap between the pinnacle of the community and its base is filled up by the week-day duties of the clergyman —by that man, of whom it has been well said, that he belongs to no rank, because he associates with all ranks —by that man, whose presence may dignify the palace, but whose peculiar glory it is to carry the influences of friendship and piety into cottages.

This is the age of moral experiment, and much has been devised in our day for promoting the virtue, and the improvement, and the economical habits of the lower orders of society. But in all these attempts to raise a barrier against the growing profligacy of our towns, one important element seems to have passed unheeded, and to have been altogether omitted in the calculation. In all the comparative estimates of the character of a town and the character of a country population, it has been little attended to, that the former are distinguished from the latter by the dreary, hopeless, and almost impassible distance at which they stand from their parish minister. Now, though it be at the hazard of again magnifying my office, I must avow, in the hearing of you all, that there is a

moral charm in his personal attentions and his affectionate civilities, and the ever-recurring influence of his visits and his prayers, which, if restored to the people, would impart a new moral aspect, and eradicate much of the licentiousness and the dishonesty that abound in our cities. On this day of national calamity, if ever the subject should be adverted to from the pulpit, we may be allowed to express our riveted convictions on the close alliance that obtains between the political interests and the religious character of a country. And I am surely not out of place, when, on looking at the mighty mass of a city population, I state my apprehension, that if something be not done to bring this enormous physical strength under the control of Christian and humanized principle, the day may yet come, when it may lift against the authorities of the land, its brawny vigour, and discharge upon them all the turbulence of its rude and volcanic energy.

Apart altogether from the essential character of the gospel, and keeping out of view the solemn representations of Christianity, by which we are told that each individual of these countless myriads carries an undying principle in his bosom, and that it is the duty of the minister to cherish it, and to watch over it, as one who must render, at the judgment-seat, an account of the charge which has been committed to him—apart from this consideration entirely, which I do not now insist upon, though I blush not to avow its paramount importance over all that can be alleged on the inferior ground of political expediency, yet, on that ground alone, I can gather argument enough for the mighty importance of such men, devoted to the labours of their own separate and peculiar employments—giving an unbewildered attention to the office of dealing with the hearts and principles of the thousands who are around them—coming forth from the preparations of an unbroken solitude, armed with all the omnipotence of Truth among their fellow-citizens—and who, rich in the

resources of a mind which meditates upon these things and gives itself wholly to them, are able to suit their admonitions to all the varieties of human character, and to draw their copious and persuasive illustrations from every quarter of human experience. But I speak not merely of their Sabbath ministrations. Give to each a manageable extent of town, within the compass of his personal exertions, and where he might be able to cultivate a ministerial influence among all its families—put it into his power to dignify the very humblest of its tenements by the courteousness of his soothing and benevolent attentions—let it be such a district of population as may not bear him down by the multiplicity of its demands; but where, without any feverish or distracting variety of labour, he may be able to familiarize himself to every house, and to know every individual, and to visit every spiritual patient, and to watch every death-bed, and to pour out the sympathies of a pious and affectionate bosom over every mourning and bereaved family. Bring every city of the land under such moral regimen as this, and another generation would not pass away, ere righteousness ran down all their streets like a mighty river. That sullen depravity of character, which the gibbet cannot scare away, and which sits so immoveable in the face of the most menacing severities and in despite of the yearly recurrence of the most terrifying examples,—could not keep its ground against the mild, but restless application of an effective christian ministry. The very worst of men would be constrained to feel the power of such an application. Sunk as they are in ignorance, and inurred as they have been from the first years of their neglected boyhood, to scenes of week-day profligacy and Sabbath profanation—these men, of whom it may be said, that all their moralities are extinct, and all their tenderness blunted—even they would feel the power of that reviving touch, which the mingled influence of kindness and piety can often impress on the souls of the

most abandoned—even they would open the flood-gates of their hearts, and pour forth the tide of an honest welcome on the men who had come in all the cordiality of good will to themselves and to their families. And thus might a humanizing and an exalting influence be made to circulate through all their dwelling-places: and such a system as this, labouring as it must do at first, under all the discouragements of a heavy and unpromising outset, would gather, during every year of its perseverance, new triumphs and new testimonies to its power. All that is ruthless and irreclaimable, in the character of the present day, would in time be replaced by the softening virtues of a purer and a better generation. This I know to be the dream of many a philanthropist: and a dream as visionary as the very wildest among the fancies of Utopianism it ever will be, under any other expedient than the one I am now pointing to: and nothing, nothing within the whole compass of nature, or of experience, will ever bring it to its consummation, but the multiplied exertions of the men who carry in their hearts the doctrine, and who bear upon their persons the seal and commission of the New Testament. And, if it be true that towns are the great instruments of political revolution—if it be there that all the elements of disturbance are ever found in busiest fermentation—if we learn, from the history of the past, that they are the favourite and frequented rallying-places for all the brooding violence of the land—who does not see that the pleading earnestness of the christian minister is at one with the soundest maxims of political wisdom, when he urges upon the rulers and magistrates of the land, that this is indeed the cheap defence of a nation—this the vitality of all its strengh and of all its greatness.

And it is with the most undissembled satisfaction that I advert to the first step of such a process, within the city of our habitation, as I have now been recommending. It may still be the day of small things: but it is such a day

as ought not to be despised. The prospect of another church and another labourer in this interesting field, demands the most respectful acknowledgment of the christian public, to the men who preside over the administration of our affairs; and they, I am sure, will not feel it to be oppressive, if, met by the willing cordialities of a responding population, the demand should ring in their ears for another, and another, till, like the moving of the spirit on the face of the waters, which made beauty and order to emerge out of the rude materials of creation, the germ of moral renovation shall at length burst into all the efflorescence of moral accomplishment—and the voice of psalms shall again be heard in our families—and impurity and violence shall be banished from our streets—and then the erazure made, in these degenerate days, on the escutcheons of our city, again replaced in characters of gold, shall tell to every stranger, that Glasgow flourisheth through the preaching of the word.*

And though, under the mournful remembrance of our departed Princess, we cannot but feel, on this day of many tears, as if a volley of lightning from heaven had been shot at the pillar of our State, and struck away the loveliest ornament from its pinnacle, and shook the noble fabric to its base; yet still, if we strengthen its foundation in the principle and character of our people, it will stand secure on the deep and steady basis of a country's worth, which can never be overthrown. And thus an enduring memorial of our Princess will be embalmed in the hearts of the people, and good will emerge out of this dark and bitter dispensation, if, when the judgments of God are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world shall learn righteousness.

* The original motto of the City is, "let Glasgow flourish through the preaching of the Word;" which, by the curtailment alluded to, has been reduced to the words, "Let Glasgow flourish."

FINIS.

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY APPLIED TO THE CASE OF RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES:

A

SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE

THE AUXILIARY SOCIETY, GLASGOW,

TO

THE HIBERNIAN SOCIETY,

FOR

ESTABLISHING SCHOOLS, AND CIRCULATING THE HOLY SCRIPTURES IN IRELAND.

BY THOMAS CHALMERS, D. D.

MINISTER OF THE TRON CHURCH, GLASGOW.

*** This Sermon was received after the present edition was struck off, but it is now given to make this edition more complete.

TO

KIRKMAN FINLAY, ESQ. M. P.

PRESIDENT OF THE HIBERNIAN AUXILIARY SOCIETY IN GLASGOW,

THE FOLLOWING SERMON

IS DEDICATED,

WITH GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS FOR THE

COUNTENANCE BESTOWED BY HIM,

ON ONE OF

THE MOST USEFUL AND BENEVOLENT INSTITUTIONS

IN OUR CITY,

AND WITH MUCH RESPECT,

BY

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

If the question were put, what is Popery? an answer might be given by the enumeration of what are conceived to be its leading principles. Without at all inquiring whether the conception be a just one or not, there are many persons who would tell us, that the members of this denomination ascribe an infallibility to the Pope; and that they hold the doctrine of transubstantiation; and that they offer religious worship to departed saints, and render an external homage to images; and that they give such an importance to the ceremonial of extreme unction, as to conceive, that by the administration of it, all the guilt of the most worthless and unrenewed character is expiated and done away.—It is enough to mark our aversion to these positions and practices, that we say, that every one of them is unscriptural; and that, if this be a real portraiture of Popery, it is a religion which has no foundation in truth or in the Bible. But it is altogether a different question, in how far Popery, as thus defined, is actually realized by those men who wear the name and the profession of it. Whether this was ever the Popery of a past age, is a question of erudition, into which we propose not to enter. And whether this be the Popery of any people of the present age, is a question of observation, into which we propose not to enter. We confine ourselves to the object of looking into our own hearts, and of looking to those who are immediately around us, with the view of ascertaining whether the contamination and the substantial mischief of these alleged principles might not be detected on a nearer field of observation.

We are all aware that such an attempt as this is not enough to satisfy many Protestants, or to fill up the measure of their

zeal against what they hold to be a most blasphemous and pestilential heresy. They would not merely demand the disavowal of a corrupt system—but they would like to see it attached with all its deformities in the form of a personal charge to the men of a certain prominent and visible denomination. Now, we do not see how the former demand can be more effectually met, than by the denunciation of this system, under whatever shape, or in whatever quarter of society, it may be found—Nor do we conceive how a more honest and decisive seal of reprobation can be set upon it, than by the expression of a dislike so strong and so irreconcileable, as to be felt, even when it obtrudes upon our notice any of its features amongst the individuals of our own connexion, and offers itself to view under the screen of an ostensible Protestantism. As to the latter demand, we frankly confess that we are not historically enough acquainted with the present state of the Catholic mind, to be at all able to comply with it. But should any member of that persuasion come forward with his own explanations, and give such a mitigated view of the peculiarities of Catholics, as to leave the great evangelical doctrines of faith and repentance unimpared by them, and state that an averment of the Bible has never, in his instance, been neutralized or practically stript of its authority, by an averment of Popes or of Councils ;—on what principle of candour shall the recognition of a common Christianity be withheld from him? Is it not better to confine our animadversion to the principles of the system, and to let persons alone : and if these persons shall step forward with the affirmation that the system is imaginary, or that, at least, it has no actual residence with them, whether is it the more Christian exhibition on our part, that we exercise, in their behalf, the charity which believeth all things, or that we pertinaciously keep by a charge, the truth of which they solemnly disclaim?

A SERMON.

MATTH. vii. 3, 4, 5.

"*And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?—Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and behold a beam is in thine own eye?—Thou hypocrite! first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.*"

THE word beam suggests the idea of a rafter; and it looks very strange that a thing of such magnitude should be at all conceived to have its seat or fixture in the eye. To remove, by a single sentence, this misapprehension, I shall just say, that the word in the original signifies also a thorn, a something that the eye has room for, but at the same time much larger than a mote, and which must, therefore, have a more powerful effect in deranging the vision, and preventing a man from forming a right estimate of the object he is looking at. Take this along with you, and the three verses will run thus:—"Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the thorn that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and behold a thorn is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite! first cast out the thorn out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."

In my farther observations on this passage, I shall first introduce what I propose to make the main subject of my discourse, by a very short application of the leading principle of my text, to the case of those judgments that we are so ready to pronounce on each other in private life. And I shall, secondly, proceed to the main subject, viz. that more general kind of judgment which we are apt to pass on the men of a different persuasion, in matters of religion.

I. Every fault of conduct in the outer man, may be run up to some defect of principle in the inner man. It is this defect of principle, which gives the fault all its criminality. It is this alone, which makes it odious in the sight of God. It is upon this that the condemnation of the law rests; and on the day of judgment, when the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open, it will be the share that the heart had in the matter, which will form the great topic of examination, when the deeds done in the body pass under the review of the Son of God. For example, it is a fault to speak evil one of another; but the essence of the fault lies in the want of that charity, which thinketh no ill. Had the heart been filled with this principle, no such bad thing as slander would have come out of it; but if the heart be not filled with this principle, and in its stead there be the operation of envy—or a desire to avenge yourselves of others, by getting the judgment of men to go against them—or a taste for the ludicrous, which, rather than be ungratified, will expose the peculiarities of the absent to the mirth of a company—or the idle and thoughtless levity of gossiping, which cannot be checked by any consideration of the mischief that may be done by its indulgence;—I say, if any or all of these, take up that room in the heart, which should have been filled with charity, and sent

forth the fruits of it, then the stream will just be as the fountain, and out of the treasure of the evil heart, there will flow that evil practice of censoriousness, on which the gospel of Christ pronounces its severe and decisive condemnation.

But though all evil-speaking be referable to the want of a good, or to the existence of an evil principle in the heart, yet there is one style of evil-speaking different from another; and you can easily conceive how a man addicted to one way of it, may hate, and despise, and have a mortal antipathy, to another way of it. In this case, it is not the thing itself in its essential deformity that he condemns; it is some of the disgusting accompaniments of the thing; and while these excite his condemnation, and he views the man in whom they are realized, as every way worthy of being reprobated, he may not be aware, all the while, that in himself there exists an equal, and perhaps, a much larger portion of that very principle, which he should be reprobated for. The forms of evil-speaking break out into manifold varieties. There is the soft insinuation. There is the resentful outcry. There is the manly and indignant disapproval. There is the invective of vulgar malignity. There is the poignancy of satirical remark. There is the giddiness of mere volatility, which trips so carelessly along, and spreads its entertaining levities over a gay and light-hearted party. These are all so many transgressions of one and the same duty; and you can easily conceive an enlightened Christian sitting in judgment over them all, and taking hold of the right principle upon which he would condemn them all; and which, if brought to bear with efficacy on the consciences of the different offenders, would not merely silence the passionate evil-speaker out of his outrageous exclamations, and

restrain the malignant evil-speaker from his deliberate thrusts at the reputation of the absent; but would rebuke the humorous evil-speaker out of his fanciful and amusing sketches, and the gossiping evil-speaker out of his tiresome and never-ending narratives. Now you may further conceive, how a man who realizes upon his own character one of these varieties, might have a positive dislike to another of them; how the open and generous-hearted denouncer of what is wrong, may hate from his very soul the poison of a sly and secret insinuation; how he who delivers himself in the chastened and well-bred tone of a gentleman, may recoil from the violence of an unmannerly invective; how he who enjoys the ridiculous of character, may be hurt and offended at hearing of the criminal of character;—and thus each, with the thorn in his own eye, may advert with regret and disapprobation to the mote in his brother's eye.

Now, mark the two advantages which arise from every man bringing himself to a strict examination, that he may if possible find out the principle of that fault in his own mind, which he conceives to deform the doings and the character of another. His attention is carried away from the mere accompaniment of the fault to its actual and constituting essence. He pursues his search from the outward and accidental varieties, to the one principle which spreads the leaven of iniquity over them all. By looking into his own heart, he is made acquainted with the movements of this principle. When forced to disapprove of others, his disapprobation is not a mere matter of taste, or of education, but the entire and well-founded disapprobation of principle. He sees where the radical mischief of the whole business lies. He sees that if the principle of doing no ill were established within the heart, it would cut up by the root all evil-speak-

ing in all its shapes and in all its modifications. His own diligent keeping of his own heart upon this subject would bring the matter into his frequent contemplation, and enable him to perceive where its essence and its malignity lay, and give him an enlightened judgment of it in all its effects and workings upon others; and thus, by the very progress of struggling against it, and watching against it, and praying against it, and in the strength of divine grace prevailing against it, and at length succeeding in pulling the thorn out of his own eye, he would see clearly to cast out the mote out of his brother's eye.

But another mighty advantage of this self-examination is, that the more a man does examine, the more does he discover the infirmities of his own character. That very infirmity against which, in another, he might have protested with all the force of a vehement indignation, he might find lurking in his own bosom, though under the disguise of a different form. Such a discovery as this will temper his indignation. It will humble him into the meekness of wisdom. It will soften him into charity. It will infuse a candour and a gentleness into all his judgments. The struggle he has had with himself to keep down the sin he sees in another, will train him to an indulgence he might never have felt, had he been altogether blind to the diseases of his own moral constitution. When he tries to reform a neighbour, the attempt will be marked by all the mildness of one who is deeply conscious of his own frailties, and fearful of the exposures which he himself may have to endure. And I leave it to your own experience of human nature to determine, whether he bids fairer for success who rebukes with the intolerant tone of a man who is unconscious of his own blemishes; or he who, with all the spirituality of an humble and exercised Christian, endeavours to re-

store him who is overtaken in a fault, with the spirit of meekness, "considering himself lest he also be tempted."

Now the fault of evil-speaking is only one out of the many. The lesson of the text might be farther illustrated by other cases and other examples. I might specify the various forms of worldliness, and wilfulness, and fraud, and falsehood, and profanity, and show how the man who realizes these sins in one form, might pass his condemnatory sentence on the man who realizes the very same sins in another form; and I might succeed in saying to the conviction of his conscience, even as Nathan said to David, "Thou art the man;" and might press home upon him the mighty task of self-examination, and set him from that to the task of diligent reform, that he might be enabled to see the fault of his neighbour more clearly, and rebuke it more gently, and winningly, and considerately. But my time restrains me from expatiating; and however great my reluctance at being withdrawn from the higher office of dealing with the hearts and the consciences of individuals, to any other office, which, however good in itself, bears a most minute and insignificant proportion to the former, yet I must not forget that I stand here as the advocate of a public Society;—and I therefore propose to throw the remainder of my discourse into such a train of observation as may bear upon its designs and its enterprises.

II. I now proceed, then, to the more general kind of judgment which we are apt to pass on men of a different persuasion in matters of religion.—There is something in the very circumstance of its being a different religion from our own, which, prior to all our acquaintance with its details, is calculated to repel and

to alarm us. It is not the religion in which we have been educated. It is not the religion which furnishes us with our associations of sacredness. Nay, it is a religion, which, if admitted into our creed, would tear asunder all these associations. It would break up all the repose of our established habits. It would darken the whole field of our accustomed contemplations. It would put to flight all those visions of the mind which stood linked with the favour of God, and the blissful prospects of eternity. It would unsettle, and disturb, and agitate; and this, not merely because it threw a doubtfulness over the question of our personal security, but because it shocked our dearest feelings of tenderness for that which we had been trained to love, and of veneration for that which we had been trained to look at in the aspect of awful and imposing solemnity.

Add to all this, the circumstance of its being a religion with the intolerance of which our fathers had to struggle unto the death; a religion which lighted up the fires of persecution in other days; a religion, which at one time put on a face of terror, and bathed its hands in the blood of cruel martyrdom; a religion, by resistance to which, the men of a departed generation are embalmed in the memory of the present, among the worthies of our established faith. We have only to contemplate the influence of these things, when handed down by tradition, and written in the most popular histories of the land, and told round the evening fire to the children of every cottage family, who listen, in breathless wonderment, to the tale of midnight alarm, and kindle at the battle-cry lifted by the patriots of a former age, when they made their noble stand for the outraged rights of conscience and of liberty; we have only to think of these things, and

we shall cease our amazement, that such a religion, even though its faults and its merits be equally unknown, should light up a passionate aversion in many a bosom, and have a recoiling sense of horror, and sacrilege, and blasphemy associated with its very name.

Now Popery is just such a religion; and I appeal to many present, if, though ignorant of almost all its doctrines and all its distinctions, there does not spring up a quickly felt antipathy in their bosoms even at the very mention of Popery. There can be no doubt, that for one or two generations, this feeling has been rapidly on the decline. But it still lurks, and operates, and spreads a very wide and sensible infusion over the great mass of our Scottish population. There is now a dormancy about it, and it does not break out into those rude and tumultuary surges, which at one time filled our streets with violence, and sent a ferment of jealousy and alarm over the whole face of our country. But we still meet with the traces of its existence. We feel it in our own bosoms when we hear of any of the ceremonials of Popery: and I just ask you to think of those peculiar sensations which rise within you at the mention of the holy water, or the consecrated wafer, or the extreme unction of the Catholic ritual. There is still a sensation of repugnance, though it be dim, and in its painfulness it be rapidly departing away from us; and I think that, even at this hour, should a Popish Chapel send up its lofty minarets, and spread a rich and expanded magnificence before the public eye, though many look with unmingled delight on the grandeur of the ascending pile, yet there may still be detected a visible expression of jealousy and offence in the side-long glance, and the inward and half-suppressed murmuring of the occasional passenger.

Now, is it not conceivable that such a traditional repugnance to Popery may exist in the very same mind, with a total ignorance of what those things are for which it merits our repugnance? May there not be a kind of sensitive recoil in the heart against this religion, while the understanding is entirely blind to those alone features which justify our dislike to it? May there not be all the violence of an antipathy within us at Popery, and there be at the same time within us all the faults and all the errors of Popery? May not the thorn be in our own eye, while the mote in our neighbour's eye is calling forth all the severity of our indignation? While we are sitting in the chair of judgment, and dealing forth from the eminence of a superior discernment, our invectives against what we think to be sacrilegious in the creed and practice of others, may it not be possible to detect in ourselves the same perversion of principle, the same idolatrous resistance to truth and righteousness; and surely, it well becomes us in this case, while we are so ready to precipitate our invectives upon the head of bystanders, to pass an humbling examination upon ourselves, that we may come to a more enlightened estimate of that which is the object of our condemnation; and that, when we condemn, we may do it with wisdom, and with the meekness of wisdom.

Let us therefore take a nearer look of Popery, and try to find out how much of Popery there is in the religion of Protestants.

But, let it be premised, that many of the disciples of this religion disclaim much of what we impute to them; that the Popery of a former age may not be a fair specimen of the Popery of the present; that, in point of fact, many of its professors have evinced all

the spirit of devout and enlightened Christians; that in many districts of Popery, the Bible is in full and active circulation; and that thus, while the name and externals are retained, and waken up all our traditional repugnance against it, there may be among thousands and tens of thousands of its nominal adherents, all the soul, and substance, and principle, and piety of a reformed faith. When I therefore enumerate the errors of Popery, I do not assert the extent to which they exist. I merely say that such errors are imputed to them; and instead of launching forth into severities against those who are thus charged, all I propose is, to direct you to the far more profitable and Christian employment of shaming ourselves out of these very errors, that we may know how to judge of others, and that we may do it with the tenderness of charity.

First, then, it is said of Papists, that they ascribe an infallibility to the Pope, so that if he were to say one thing and the Bible another, his authority would carry it over the authority of God. And, think you, my brethren, that there is no such Popery among you? Is there no taking of your religion upon trust from another, when you should draw it fresh and unsullied from the fountain-head of inspiration? You all have, or you ought to have, Bibles; and how often is it repeated there, "Hearken diligently unto me?" Now, do you obey this requirement, by making the reading of your Bibles a distinct and earnest exercise? Do you ever dare to bring your favourite minister to the tribunal of the word, or would you tremble at the presumption of such an attempt, so that the hearing of the word carries a greater authority over your mind than the reading of the word? Now this want of daring, this trembling at the very idea of a dissent from your minis-

ter, this indolent acquiescence in his doctrine, is just calling another man master; it is putting the authority of man over the authority of God; it is throwing yourself into a prostrate attitude at the footstool of human infallibility; it is not just kissing the toe of reverence, but it is the profounder degradation of the mind and of all its faculties; and without the name of Popery—that name which lights up so ready an antipathy in your bosoms, your soul may be infected with the substantial poison, and your conscience be weighed down by the oppressive shackles, of Popery. And all this, in the noonday effulgence of a Protestant country, where the Bible, in your mother tongue, circulates among all your families—where it may be met with in almost every shelf, and is ever soliciting you to look to the wisdom that is inscribed upon its pages. O! how tenderly should we deal with the prejudices of a rude and uneducated people, who have no Bibles, and no art of reading among them, to unlock its treasures, when we think that, even in this our land, the voice of human authority carries so mighty an influence along with it, and veneration for the word of God is darkened and polluted by a blind veneration for its interpreters.

We tremble to read of the fulminations that have issued in other days from a conclave of cardinals.—Have we no conclaves, and no fulminations, and no orders of inquisition, in our own country? Is there no professing brotherhood, or no professing sisterhood, to deal their censorious invectives around them, upon the members of an excommunicated world? There is such a thing as a religious public. There is a "little flock," on the one hand, and a "world lying in wickedness," on the other. But have a care, ye who think yourselves of the favoured few, how you never trans-

gress the mildness, and charity, and unostentatious virtues of the gospel; lest you hold out a distorted picture of Christianity in your neighbourhood, and impose that as religion on the fancy of the credulous, which stands at as wide a distance from the religion of the New Testament, as do the services of an exploded superstition, or the mummeries of an antiquated ritual.

But, again, it is said of Papists, that they hold the monstrous doctrine of transubstantiation. Now, a doctrine may be monstrous on two grounds. It may be monstrous on the ground of its absurdity, or it may be monstrous on the ground of its impiety. It must have a most practically mischievous effect on the conscience, should a communicant sit down at the table of the Lord; and think that the act of appointed remembrance is equivalent to a real sacrifice, and a real expiation; and leave the performance with a mind unburdened of all its past guilt, and resolved to incur fresh guilt to be wiped away by a fresh expiation. But in the sacraments of our own country, is there no crucifying of the Lord afresh? Is there none of that which gives the doctrine of transubstantiation all its malignant influence on the hearts and lives of its proselytes? Is there no mysterious virtue annexed to the elements of this ordinance? Instead of being repaired to for the purpose of recruiting our languid affections to the Saviour, and strengthening our faith, and arming us with a firmer resolution, and more vigorous purpose of obedience, does the conscience of no communicant solace itself by the mere performance of the outward act, and suffer him to go back with a more reposing security to the follies, and vices, and indulgences of the world? Then, my brethren, his erroneous view of the sacrament may not be clothed in a term so appalling to the hearts and the feelings of

Protestants as transubstantiation, but to it belongs all the immorality of transubstantiation; and the thorn must be pulled out of his eye, ere he can see clearly to cast the mote out of his brother's eye.

But, thirdly, it is said, that Papists worship saints, and fall down to graven images. This is very, very bad. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." But let us take ourselves to task upon this charge also. Have we no consecrated names in the annals of reformation—no worthies who hold too commanding a place in the remembrance and affection of Protestants? Are there no departed theologians, whose works hold too domineering an ascendency over the faith and practice of Christians? Are there no laborious compilations of other days, which, instead of interpreting the Bible, have given its truths a shape, and a form, and an arrangement, that confer upon them another impression, and impart to them another influence, from the pure and original record? We may not bend the knee in any sensible chamber of imagery, at the remembrance of favourite saints. But do we not bend the understanding before the volumes of favourite authors, and do an homage to those representations of the minds of the men of other days, which should be exclusively given to the representation of the mind of the Spirit, as put down in the book of the Spirit's revelation? It is right that each of us should give the contribution of his own talents, and his own learning, to this most interesting cause; but let the great drift of our argument be to prop the authority of the Bible, and to turn the eye of earnestness upon its pages; for if any work, instead of exalting the Bible, shall be made, by the misjudging reverence of others, to stand in its place, then we in-

troduce a false worship into the heart of a reformed country, and lay prostrate the conscience of men, under the yoke of a spurious authority.

But, fourthly and lastly—for time does not permit such an enumeration, as would exhaust all the leading peculiarities ascribed to this faith—it is stated, that by the form of a confession, in the last days of a sinner's life, and the ministration of extreme unction upon his deathbed, he may be sent securely to another world, with all the unrepented profligacy, and fraud, and wickedness of this world upon his forehead; that this is looked forward to, and counted upon by every Catholic—and sets him loose from all those anticipations which work upon the terror of other men—and throws open to him an unbridled career, through the whole of which, he may wanton in all the varieties of criminal indulgence—and at length, when death knocks at his door, if he just allow him time to send for his minister, and to hurry along with him, through the steps of an adjusted ceremonial, the man's passage through that dark vale, which carries him out of the world, is strewed with the promises of delusion—that every painful remembrance of the past is stifled amid the splendours and the juggleries of an imposing ritual: and in place of conscience rising upon him, and charging him with the guilty track of disobedience he has run, and forcing him to flee, amid the agitations of his restless bed, to the blood of the great Atonement, and alarming him into an earnest cry for the clean heart and the right spirit, knowing that unless he be born again unto repentance, he shall perish—why, my brethren, instead of these salutary exercises, we are told, that a fictitious hope is made to pour its treacherous sunshine into the bosom of a deceived Catholic—that,

when standing on the verge of eternity, he can cast a fearless eye over its dark and untravelled vastness,—and that, for the terror of its coming wrath, his guilty and unrenewed soul is filled with all the radiance and all the elevation of its anticipated glories.

O! my brethren, it is piteous to think of such a preparation, but it is just such a preparation as meets the sad experience of us all. The man, whose every affection has clung to the world, till the last hour of his possibility to enjoy it; who never put forth an effort or a prayer to be delivered from the power of sin, till every faculty for its pleasures had expired; who, through the varied progress of his tastes and his desires, from amusement to dissipation, and from dissipation to business, had always a something in all the successive stages of his career, to take up his heart to the exclusion of him who formed it;—why, such a man, who never thought of pressing the lessons of the minister upon his conscience, while life was vigorous, and the full swing of its delights and occupations could be indulged in,—do we never find, even in the bosom of this reformed country, that while his body retains all its health, his spirit retains all its hardihood; and not till the arrival of that week, or that month, or that year, when the last messenger begins to alarm him, does he think of sending to the man of God, an humble supplicant for his attendant prayers. Ah! my brethren, do you not think, amid the tones, and the sympathies, and the tears, which an affectionate pastor pours out in the fervency of his soul, and mingles with all his petitions, and all his addresses to the dying man, that no flattering unction ever steals upon him, to lull his conscience, and smooth the agony of his departure? Then, my brethren, you mistake it, you sadly mistake it; and even here, where I lift my

voice among a crowd of men, in the prime and unbroken vigour of their days,—if even the youngest and likeliest of you all, shall, trusting to some future repentance, cherish the purpose of sin another hour, and not resolve at this critical and important Now, to break it all off, by an act of firm abandonment, then be your abhorrence at Popery what it may, you are exemplifying the worst of its errors, and wrapping yourselves up in the cruelest and most inveterate of its delusions.

I have left myself very little time for the application of all this to the particular objects of our Society.—First, Let it correct the very gross and vulgar tendency we all have to think, that the kingdom of God cometh with observation. That kingdom has its seat within us, and consists in the reign of principle over the hidden and invisible mind. The mere deposition of the Pope from that throne where he sits surrounded with the splendour of temporalities,—the mere ascendency of Protestant princes, over the counsels and politics of the world,—the mere exclusion of Catholic subjects from our administrations and our Parliaments,—these things are all very observable, but they may all happen, without one inch of progress being made towards the establishment of that kingdom, which cometh not with observation. Why, my brethren, the supposition may be a very odd one, nor do I say that it is at all likely to be realized,—but for the sake of illustration, I will come forward with it. Conceive that the Spirit of God, accompanying the circulation of the word of God, were to introduce all its truths and all its lessons into the heart of every individual of the Catholic priesthood; and that the Pope himself, instead of being brought down in person from the secular eminence he occupies, were brought down in spirit, with all his lofty imaginations, to the

captivity of the obedience of Christ,—then I am not prepared to assert, that under the influence of this great Christian episcopacy, a mighty advancement may not be made in building up the kingdom of God, and in throwing down the kingdom of Satan, throughout all the territories of Catholic Christendom. And yet, with all this, the name of Catholic may be retained,—the external and visible marks of distinction, may be as prominent as ever,—and with all those insignia about them, which keep up our passionate antipathy to this denomination, there might not be a single ingredient in the spirit of its members, to merit our rational antipathy. I beg you will just take all this as an attempt at the illustration of what I count a very important principle;—and, to make the illustration more complete, let me take up the case of a Protestant country, and put the supposition, that, with the name of a pure and spiritual religion, the majority of its inhabitants are utter strangers to its power; that an indifference to the matters of faith and of eternity, works all the effect of a deep and fatal infidelity on their consciences; that the world engrosses every heart, and the kingdom which is not of this world, is virtually disowned and held in derision among the various classes and characters of society; that the spirit of the New Testament is banished from our Parliaments, and banished from our Universities, and banished from the great bulk of our ecclesiastical establishments, and it is only to be met with among a few inconsiderable men, who are scouted by the general voice as the fanatics and visionaries of the day;—then, my brethren, I am not to be charmed out of truth, and of principle, by the mockery of a name. Call such a country reformed, as you may, it is full of the strong holds of antichrist, from one end to the other of it; and

there must be a revolution of sentiment there, as well as in the darkest regions of Popery, ere the "enemies of the Son of God be consumed by the breath of his mouth," or "Babylon the great be fallen."

Now, secondly, mark the influence of such a train of sentiment, on the spirit of those who are employed in spreading the light of reformation among a Catholic people. It will purify their aim, and give it a judicious direction, and chase away from their proceedings that offensive tone of arrogance which is calculated to irritate, and to beget a more determined obstinacy of prejudice than ever. Their great aim, to express it in one word, is to plant in the hearts of all men of all countries, the religion of the Bible. Their great direction will be toward the establishment of right principle; and in the prosecution of it, they will carefully avoid multiplying the points of irritation, by giving vent to their traditional repugnance against the less material forms of Popery. And the meek consciousness of that woful departure from vital Christianity, which has taken place even in the reformed countries of Christendom, will devest them of that repulsive superiority which, I fear, has gone far to defeat the success of many an attempt, upon many an enemy of the truth as it is in Jesus. "The whole amount of our message is to furnish you with the Bible, and to furnish you with the art of reading it. We think the lessons of this book well fitted to chase away the manifold errors, which rankle in the bosom of our own country. You are the subjects of error as well as we; and we trust that you will find them useful, in enlightening the prejudices, and in aiding the frailties to which, as the children of one common humanity, we are all liable. Amongst us, there is a mighty deference to the authority of man: if this exist among you, here is a book

which tells us to call no man master, and delivers us from the fallibility of human opinions. Amongst us, there is a delusive confidence in the forms of godliness, with little of its power: here is a book, which tells us that holiness of life is the great end of all our ceremonies, and of all our sacraments. Amongst us there is a host of theologians, each wielding his separate authority over the creed and the conscience of his countrymen, and you, Catholics, have justly reproached us with our manifold and never-ending varieties; but here is a book, the influence of which is throwing all these differences into the back ground, and bringing forward those great and substantial points of agreement, which lead us to recognise the man of another creed to be essentially a Christian,—and we want to widen this circle of fellowship, that we may be permitted to live in the exercise of one faith, and of one charity along with you. Amongst us, the great bulk of men pass through life forgetful of eternity, and think, that by the sighs and the ministrations of their last days, they will earn all the blessedness of its ever-during rewards. But here is a book which tells us that we should seek first the kingdom of God; and will not let us off with any other repentance than repentance now; and tells us, what we trust, will light with greater energy on your consciences than it has ever done upon ours, that we should haste and make no delay to keep the commandments." O! my brethren, let us not despair that such arguments, urged by the mild charity which adorns the Bible, and followed up by its circulation, will at length tell on the firmest defences that bigotry ever raised around the conscience and the principles of men—and that, out of those jarring elements which threaten our empire with a wild war of tur-

bulence and disorder, we shall by the blessing of God be enabled to cement all its members into one great and harmonious family.

I conclude with saying, that, mainly and substantially speaking, I conceive this to be the very spirit of the attempt that is now making by the Society I am now pleading for. It is not an offensive declaration of war against Popery. It is true that it may be looked upon virtually as a measure of hostility against the errors of Catholics, but no more than it is a measure of hostility against the errors of Protestants. The light of truth is fitted to chase away all error, and there is something in that Bible which the agents of our Society are now teaching so assiduously, that it is not more humbling and more severe on the general spirit of Ireland, than it is on the general spirit of our own country. It is true, that some of the Catholics set their face against the establishment of our Schools, but this resistance to education is not peculiar to them. It is to be met with in England. It is to be met with in our own boasted and beloved Scotland. It is to be met with even among the enlightened classes of British Society—and shall we speak of it as if it fastened a peculiar stigma on that Country, which we have left to languish in depression and ignorance for so many generations? But, this resistance on the part of Catholics is far from general. In one district the teachers of our Schools are chiefly Roman Catholics; many of the School Houses are Catholic Chapels; and the great majority of the Scholars are children of Catholic parents, who have appeared not a little elated that their children have proved more expert in their scriptural quotations than their neighbours.—Call you not this an auspicious commencement? Is there no loosening of prejudice

here? Do you not perceive that the firmest system of bigotry, ever erected over the minds of a prostrate population, must give way before the continued operation of such an expedient as this? There is no one device of human policy that has done so much for Ireland in a whole century, as is now doing by the progress of education, and the freer circulation of the gospel of light through the dark mass and interior of their peasantry. Let me crave the assistance of the public in this place to one of the most powerful instruments that has yet been set agoing for helping forward this animating cause. It is an instrument ready made to your hand. The Hibernian Society have already established 347 Schools in our Sister Country, a number equal to one third of the parishes in Scotland; and they are dealing out education, a pure scriptural education, to 27,700 Irish children. It will be a disgrace to us if we do not signalize ourselves in such a business as this. We talk of the Irish as a wild and uncivilized people. It will be the indication of a very gross and uncivilized public at home, if we restrict our interchange with the men of the opposite shore, to the one interchange of merchandise. Let the rudeness of the Irish be what it may, sure I am, that there is much in their constitutional character to encourage us in this enterprise. They have many good points and engaging properties about them. I speak not of that peculiar style of genius and of eloquence, which gives such fascination to the poets, the authors, the orators of Ireland. I speak of the great mass, and I do think that I perceive a something in the natural character of Ireland, which draws me more attractively to the love of its people, than any other picture of national manners ever has inspired. Even amid the wildest extravagance of that

humour which sits so visibly and so universally on the countenance of the Irish population, I can see a heart and a social sympathy along with it. Amid all the wayward and ungovernable flights of that rare pleasantry which belongs to them, there is a something by which the bosom of an Irishman can be seriously and permanently affected, and which I think in judicious hands is convertible into the finest results on the ultimate character of that people. It strikes me, that, of all the men on the face of the earth, they would be the worst fitted to withstand the expression of honest, frank, liberal, and persevering kindness;—that if they saw there was no artful policy in the attentions by which you plied them, but that an upright and firmly sustained benevolence lay at the bottom of all your exertions for the best interest of their families; could they attain the conviction, that, amid all the contempt and all the resistance you experienced from their hands, there still existed in your bosoms an unquelled and an undissembled love for them and for their children;—could they see the working of this principle devested of every treacherous and suspicious symptom, and unwearied amid every discouragement in prosecuting the task of their substantial amelioration,—Why, my brethren, let all this come to be seen, and in a few years I trust our devoted missionaries will bring it before them broad and undeniable as the light of day, and those hearts that are now shut against you in sullenness and disdain will be subdued into tenderness; the strong emotions of gratitude and nature will at length find their way through all the barriers of prejudice; and a people whom no penalties could turn, whom no terror of military violence could overcome, who kept on a scowling front of hostility that was not to be softened,

while war spread its desolating cruelties over their unhappy land,—this very people will do homage to the omnipotence of charity, and when the mighty armour of Christian kindness is brought to bear upon them, it will be found to be irresistible.

APPENDIX.

Extracts from the Eleventh Annual Report of the Hibernian Society, for Establishing Schools, and circulating the Holy Scriptures in Ireland.— London, 1817.

"THE Committee are persuaded, that among the numerous Institutions which the Divine power and goodness have raised up in this kingdom, the Hibernian Society, if duly considered, will stand very high in the scale of moral and religious importance; and they are happy to add, that the present Report will present to its worthy supporters, continued and additional instances of the practicability of its designs, and the success of its operations.

"In the good work of establishing Schools for the education of the children of the poor, in Ireland, the Committee had proceeded so far, at the time of holding the last General Meeting, as to report, that the number of Schools exceeded three hundred; and that the children and adults educated therein were upwards of nineteen thousand. They have now the pleasure to state, that, by the annual return which was made up to Christmas last, the number of Schools is 347; and the children and adults educated therein, are 27,776.

"Such is the endearing and interesting spectacle which the present state of the labours of the Society presents to its benevolent supporters. Every Parent, every Christian, and every Briton must rejoice in the accomplishment of so much good to Ireland, where it was so peculiarly needed; and it is of such a nature, and is in such a course of extension and increase, as to afford the most reasonable expectations of enlarged and permanent benefits to that part of the United Kingdom.

"The Committee are happy to state, that the regulations for the conduct of the Schools are in full operation, and that the Inspectors are active and circumspect. The progress of the children in learning to read, and in committing the Scriptures to memory, and the interest that even Catholic parents feel in having their little ones appear with credit at the inspections, are truly gratifying. The attention of the Masters, in general, to the import of the sacred word, is pleasingly on the increase: and among such as have had their own understandings enlightened and informed, there exists a spirit of emulation to have their pupils excel in giving suitable answers to questions relating to the meaning of the passages which they repeat."

"These instances evidently show the immediate and direct influence which the Schools produce on the minds of the parents of the children who are educated therein; and that an emanation of Scripture light, and a portion of religious interest of the most important and useful kind, are introduced into the humble cottages of the poor. These now have some 'light in their dwellings,' in the midst of surrounding darkness and superstition; which, however, begins to be penetra-

ted with the beams of Divine truth, and to be impressed with that word which is "quick and powerful, and a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." On this interesting subject, a most valuable correspondent of the Committee thus writes :—

"From the many applications I receive from individuals from different parts of the country for Bibles and Testaments, there is strong evidence to the spreading of religious inquiry among the mass of the people. Many of them come from places remote from any of the Schools; but I always find that anxiety for the Scriptures has been excited by converse with some who have been pupils therein, who have lived in the neighbourhood of the Schools, or have been in some other ways immediately or remotely connected with them.

"Could the moral and religious improvement of the human mind be as easily discovered as the agricultural improvement of a country, those numerous districts where the Schools have been for any time established, would be found to exhibit a striking contrast to those wherein they have not yet taken place. While these would be seen in all the nakedness of sterility, or fruitful only in the production of noxious weeds; in the other it would appear that in a great degree the fallow ground has been broken up, the good seed sown and in a state of vegetation, waiting for the early and latter rain; in many, the appearance of a healthful crop would gladden the eye, and in some, the fields would appear already white unto the harvest.

"The great increase in the number of the Schools; the amazing anxiety for the Scriptures which they have been the means of exciting in every district; the increasing demand for evening Schools for the instruction of the adult population,—all pressingly call for such a supply of Bibles and Testaments as I am unable to meet. Were the wonders doing in this country by the instrumentality of the Hibernian Society fully known in England, and their importance rightly appreciated, no Society would be found deserving of greater support."

"The Committee continue to give the greatest encouragement to the instruction of adults in the vicinity of the Schools; and they receive the most pleasing accounts of the efficacy of the word of God, in the enlightening of the minds of those who probably would never have had an opportunity of reading the Scriptures, or of hearing them read, had it not been for the free Schools which this Society has established, and for the numerous copies of the Divine word which it has industriously circulated. Indeed, the Visiters to the Schools perceive and acknowledge, that, *were it not for the labours of this Institution it would be impossible for the Bible Societies to get the Scriptures into the hands of the Catholics*, the great mass of the population of Ireland.

"The formation of Irish classes in the Schools which are appropriate thereto, continues to be sedulously promoted. An additional allowance has been granted to the Masters for their Irish Testament classes; and this has powerfully operated to increase the demand for Irish Testaments, both in the day Schools, and also in those which are held in the evening, for teaching the adults.

"The Committee could adduce additional instances of approbation and support from some of the Catholic Clergy, both of the Society's Schools, and of its exertions to circulate the Scriptures; but the limits of this Report will not permit an enlargement on this pleasing and interesting subject. If, however, the views and

objects of this Institution have only commended themselves as yet to a small part of the Catholic body, the Committee are happy to state that, in the Protestant community, the high importance of the Hibernian Society increasingly arrests public attention; that the demands for Schools in almost every district are more numerous than can be attended to; and that in every place respectable individuals come forward, unsolicited, to carry into execution the benevolent designs of the Society. And here it is very appropriate and grateful to observe, that to the Clergy of the Established Church who have afforded their patronage to the Schools, and have condescended to act as Visiters, the Society are under very great obligations; and particularly to an excellent Dignitary of that Church, who has always entered into the views of the Society with a liberal mind, has furthered them with continued assiduity, and has recently from the pulpit pleaded the cause of the Institution, and thereby added to its celebrity and support. This last service called for the official thanks of the Committee. They were transmitted by the Treasurer, and the answer which has been received from this estimable personage is so characteristic of his piety and philanthropy, and so highly honourable to the Hibernian Society, that it would be unsuitable and injurious to withhold the following extract:—

"I have received your very kind letter, communicating the thanks of the Committee of the Hibernian Society of London, to me, for the sermon I preached in Sligo Church on their behalf; and for other services which the Committee are pleased kindly to notice, as rendered by me to the Schools under their patronage. Whatever little I have been enabled to do, I have felt that therein I have been doing the best service I could to this quarter of my *poor benighted* country. And I thank God, that I see the exertions which the Society has made already (and they have been great) so largely owned of Him. I am persuaded, that nothing is calculated so much, under the Divine blessing, to dispel the gross darkness that has covered this land, for so many ages, as such a system of general Scriptural education, as that adopted by your Society. And I have to acknowledge that the establishment of the Society's Schools in the vicinity of my ministerial duties, has proved the happy instrument of a great enlargement of utterance and usefulness to me; and never more did I experience this enlargement, than on the late occasion of my visiting Sligo, to advocate the cause of the Society. If I have done this with any degree of success, I desire to thank, and give glory to God. Surely you well deserve the cordial co-operation of the Irish public; and you call forth from Irish Christians, thanksgivings to God, for the grace bestowed upon you."

It has been noticed that the number of children and adults taught in the Society's Schools has increased, in the course of the last year, from 19,000 to 27,000, and that requisitions for additional Schools are far more numerous than can be complied with. It will also be remembered, that at the time of holding the last Annual Meeting, the expenditure of the Society had exceeded its income upwards of 600*l*. In this conflict of an enlarged establishment and a deficient revenue, of encouraging prospects and limited means, the Committee have endeavoured to increase the funds of the Society, and to lessen the expenses of its future operations. To obtain the first-mentioned benefit, they have transmitted a circular letter to Ministers generally, in town and country, describing the state of the In-

stitution, as to its importance, its usefulness, and its necessities; urging them to interest themselves, in procuring Subscriptions and Donations: and particularly and earnestly requesting them to incorporate it amongst those other excellent Societies, for the assistance of which Auxiliary Institutions have in so many places been established. These dispense their tributary streams with fertilizing and invigorating energies; and if, in their course, they were permitted to visit and enrich the Hibernian Society, Ireland would greatly benefit by the diffusion, and would ardently bless her pious and liberal benefactors.—With regard to lessening the expense of future operations, the Committee have endeavoured to connect the formation of *new* Schools, with an Annual Subscription; and, in this way, it is to be hoped, that many of the resident noblemen and gentlemen in Ireland, will assist in carrying into effect the designs, and in relieving the funds, of the Hibernian Society.

It has been truly gratifying to the Committee, to state the considerable increase of the Society's Schools, and the evident utility and success of its operations; but it is with regret that they view the inadequacy of the funds to defray the necessary expenses of the Institution; and with anxiety that they contrast the openings of Providence which present themselves, for exertions of a very extensive nature—in the highest degree important, and promising the most happy results,—with the alarming deficiency of pecuniary means for following those providential leadings, with the energies and the hopes which they are so well calculated to inspire.

With respect to the progress which has already been made in fulfilling the purposes for which the Society was formed, it may be observed,—that its advances in extension of operations, and its success by its means and instruments, have proved in the highest degree pleasing and satisfactory. It was not till about the year 1809, that Schools were established in Ireland, under the patronage of the Hibernian Society; from which period to the present time, these establishments have so increased as to include upwards of 27,000 pupils. And when it is considered that the Schools have been formed, and the children collected therein, for the purpose of imparting the benefits of education to the lower classes of the people, who had neither the means nor the hopes of these benefits from any other quarter; and also of diffusing the blessings of pure Scriptural instruction among those to whom the policy and the power of their superiors forbid the introduction of these blessings; surely it must be acknowledged, that the designs and operations of the Society have been appropriate and efficient, for the removal of the greatest of evils, and for the production of the most essential and important good. In fact, the gradually increasing operations of the Society have greatly exceeded its progressive means of support; its designs have been truly laudable and excellent, its means and instruments well adapted to execute them, and the sphere of its labours admirably calculated to gratify British benevolence, and to reward Christian zeal. Under all these circumstances, it is a matter of surprise and regret, that the income of this Institution, arising from annual subscriptions, does not amount to 500*l.*; whilst its annual expenditure is upwards of 4,000*l.*!! The deficiency has, in part, been supplied by Donations and Collections, and also by assistance received from Auxiliary Societies; but the arrears at length amount

to a sum (1,605*l.*) which must have become burdensome to the Treasurer, embarrassing to the Committee, and prejudicial to the interest of the Society.

To relieve it of this debt, is the anxious wish of its Committee, and must be the earnest desire of its Members. And when it is considered, as having arisen out of the actual prosperity of the cause, which the Society was established to promote, and from the enlarged and successful exertions which it has been enabled to prosecute, the Committee are persuaded that every Member of the Institution will feel it to be his duty and his pleasure, to unite with them, in immediate and earnest efforts, to replenish and increase its funds, in order that the Society may be relieved from the pressure of present obligations, and be capacitated to enter on a course of additional labours, and of extensive and hopeful exertions.

That the operations of this Society should be stationary, whilst the most fair and promising prospects open for their extension; that the benefits of education which it has conferred, and the blessings of Scriptural instruction, which it has imparted, should be circumscribed comparatively to a few, while hundreds of thousands are perishing for lack of knowledge, is a state of things, which must wound the feelings, and disappoint the hopes, of the supporters of the Institution.

That a work so truly important, that objects so highly benevolent, and that efforts so eminently successful, will be impeded or paralyzed for want of pecuniary support, the Committee cannot believe. For the appeal to Christian principles, feelings, and generosity, is made, in the present instance, to the religious public in Great Britain; whose noble liberality supports efforts of compassion and mercy, amongst the ignorant and the miserable, in the most distant parts of the world. And this liberality will surely not be withheld from the Hibernian Society, whose labours are directed to remove the afflicting spectacle of ignorance, superstition, immorality, and mental degradation, which the lower classes of the community in Ireland exhibit; to place our "brethren according to the flesh," our fellow subjects, on the same high ground of moral and national advantage on which we stand, and thus to promote their best interest, their highest happiness, and their eternal salvation.

THE END.

THE

EVIDENCE AND AUTHORITY

OF THE

CHRISTIAN REVELATION.

THE

EVIDENCE AND AUTHORITY

OF THE

CHRISTIAN REVELATION.

BY THE

REV. THOMAS CHALMERS,

one of the ministers of Glasgow.

Sixth Edition.

ANDOVER:

PUBLISHED AND SOLD BY MARK NEWMAN.

Flagg & Gould....printers.

1818.

ADVERTISEMENT.

The contents of this volume form the substance of the article Christianity, in the Edinburgh Encyclopædia. Its appearance is due to the liberality of the Proprietors of that Work—nor did the Author conceive the purpose of presenting it to the world in another shape, till he was permitted and advised by them to republish it in a separate form. It is chiefly confined to the exposition of the historical argument for the truth of Christianity; and the aim of the Author is fulfilled if he has succeeded in proving the external testimony to be so sufficient, as to leave Infidelity without excuse, even though the remaining important branches of the Christian defence had been less strong and satisfactory than they are. "The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness "of me." "And if I had not done the works among them "which none other man did, they had not had sin."

The Author is far from asserting the study of the historical evidence to be the only channel to a faith in the truth of Christianity. How could he, in the face of the obvious fact, that there are thousands and thousands of Christians, who bear the most undeniable marks of the truth having come home to their understanding "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power?" They have an evidence within themselves, which the world

knoweth not, even the promised manifestations of the Saviour. This evidence is a "sign to them that believe;" but the Bible speaks also of a "sign to them which believe not;" and should it be effectual in reclaiming any of these from their infidelity, a mighty object is gained by the exhibition of it. Should it not be effectual, it will be to them "a savour of death "unto death;" and this is one of the very effects ascribed to the proclamation of Christian truth in the first ages. If, even in the face of that kind of evidence, which they have a relish and respect for, they still hold out against the reception of the Gospel, this must aggravate the weight of the threatening which lies upon them; "How shall they escape, if they "neglect so great a salvation?"

It will be a great satisfaction to the writer of the following pages, if any shall rise from the perusal of them, with a stronger determination than before to take his Christianity exclusively from his Bible. It is not enough to entitle a man to the name of a Christian, that he professes to believe the Bible to be a genuine communication from God. To be the disciple of any book, he must do something more than satisfy himself that its contents are true—he must read the book—he must obtain a knowledge of the contents. And how many are there in the world, who do not call the truth of the Bible message in question, while they suffer it to lie beside them unopened, unread, and unattended to!

CONTENTS.

CHAP. I.

PAGE.

On the Principles of Historical Evidence, and their application to the Question of the Truth of Christianity . 9

CHAP. II.

On the Authenticity of the different Books of the New Testament 30

CHAP. III.

On the Internal Marks of Truth and Honesty to be found in the New Testament 45

CHAP. IV.

On the Testimony of the Original Witnesses to the Truth of the Gospel Narrative 62

CHAP. V.

On the Testimony of Subsequent Witnesses 71

CHAP. VI.

Remarks on the Argument from Prophecy 105

CHAP. VII.

Remarks on the Scepticism of Geologists 116

CHAP. VIII.

On the Internal Evidence, and the Objections of Deistical Infidels 123

CHAP. IX.

On the Way of proposing the argument to Atheistical Infidels 147

CHAP. X.

On the Supreme Authority of Revelation 154

EVIDENCES

OF

CHRISTIANITY.

CHAP. I.

ON THE PRINCIPLES OF HISTORICAL EVIDENCE, AND THEIR APPLICATION TO THE QUESTION OF THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY.

WERE a verbal communication to come to us from a person at a distance, there are two ways in which we might try to satisfy ourselves, that this was a true communication, and that there was no imposition in the affair. We might either sit in examination upon the substance of the message; and then from what we knew of the person from whom it professed to come, judge whether it was probable that such a message would be sent by him; or we may sit in examination upon the credibility of the messengers.

It is evident, that in carrying on the first examination, we might be subject to very great uncertainty. The professed author of the communication in question may

live at such a distance from us, that we may never have it in our power to verify his message by any personal conversation with him. We may be so far ignorant of his character and designs, as to be unqualified to judge of the kind of communication that should proceed from him. To estimate aright the probable authenticity of the message from what we know of its author, would require an acquaintance with his plans, and views, and circumstances, of which we may not be in possession. We may bring the greatest degree of sagacity to this investigation; but then the highest sagacity is of no avail, when there is an insufficiency of data. Our ingenuity may be unbounded; but then we may want the materials. The principle which we assume may be untrue in itself, and therefore may be fallacious in its application.

Thus, we may derive very little light from our first argument. But there is still a second in reserve,—the credibility of the messengers. We may be no judges of the kind of communication which is natural, or likely to proceed from a person with whom we are but imperfectly acquainted; but we may be very competent judges of the degree of faith that is to be reposed in the bearers of that communication. We may know and appreciate the natural signs of veracity. There is a tone and a manner characteristic of honesty, which may be both intelligible and convincing. There may be a concurrence of several messengers. There may be their substantial agreement. There may be the total want of any thing like concert or collusion among them. There may be their determined and unanimous perseverance, in spite of all the incredulity and all the opposition which they meet with. The subject of the communication may be most unpalatable to us; and we may be so unreasonable, as to wreak our unpleasant feelings upon the bearers of it. In this way, they may not only have no earthly interest to deceive us,

but have the strongest inducement possible to abstain from insisting upon that message which they were charged to deliver. Last of all, as the conclusive seal of their authenticity, they may all agree in giving us a watchword, which we previously knew could be given by none but their master; and which none but his messengers could ever obtain the possession of. In this way, unfruitful as all our efforts may have been upon the first subject of examination, we may derive from the second the most decisive evidence, that the message in question is a real message, and was actually transmitted to us by its professed author.

Now, this consideration applies in all its parts to a message from God. The argument for the truth of this message resolves itself into the same two topics of examination. We may sit in judgment upon the subject of the message; or we may sit in judgment upon the credibility of its bearers.

The first forms a great part of that argument for the truth of the Christian religion, which comes under the head of its *internal evidences*. The substance of the message is neither more nor less, than that particular scheme of the divine economy which is revealed to us in the New Testament; and the point of inquiry is, whether this scheme be consistent with that knowledge of God and his attributes which we are previously in possession of?

It appears to many, that no effectual argument can be founded upon this consideration, because they do not count themselves enough acquainted with the designs or character of the being from whom the message professes to have come. Were the author of the message some distant and unknown individual of our own species, we would scarcely be entitled to found an argument upon any comparison of ours, betwixt the import of the message and the character of the individual, even though we had our general experience of human nature to help us in

the speculation. Now, of the invisible God, we have no experience whatever. We are still further removed from all direct and personal observation of him or of his counsels. Whether we think of the eternity of his government, or the mighty range of its influence over the wide departments of nature and providence, he stands at such a distance from us, as to make the management of his empire a subject inaccessible to all our faculties.

It is evident, however, that this does not apply to the second topic of examination. The bearers of the message were beings like ourselves; and we can apply our safe and certain experience of man to their conduct and testimony. We may know too little of God, to found any argument upon the coincidence which we conceive to exist between the subject of the message and our previous conceptions of its author. But we may know enough of man to pronounce upon the credibility of the messengers. Had they the manner and physiognomy of honest men? Was their testimony resisted, and did they persevere in it? Had they any interest in fabricating the message; or did they suffer in consequence of this perseverance? Did they suffer to such a degree, as to constitute a satisfying pledge of their integrity? Was there more than one messenger, and did they agree as to the substance of that communication which they made to the world? Did they exhibit any special mark of their office as the messengers of God; such a mark as none but God could give, and none but his approved messengers could obtain the possession of? Was this mark the power of working miracles; and were these miracles so obviously addressed to the senses, as to leave no suspicion of deceit behind them? These are questions which we feel our competency to take up, and to decide upon. They lie within the legitimate boundaries of human observation; and upon the solu-

tion of these do we rest the question of the truth of the Christian religion.

This, then, is the state of the question with those to whom the message was originally addressed. They had personal access to the messengers; and the evidences of their veracity lay before them. They were the eye and ear-witnesses of those facts, which occurred at the commencement of the Christian religion, and upon which its credibility rests. What met their observation must have been enough to satisfy them; but we live at the distance of nearly 2000 years, and is there enough to satisfy us? Those facts, which constitute the evidence for Christianity, might have been credible and convincing to them, if they really saw them; but is there any way by which they can be rendered credible and convincing to us, who only read of them? What is the expedient by which the knowledge and belief of the men of other times can be transmitted to posterity? Can we distinguish between a corrupt and a faithful transmission? Have we evidence before us, by which we can ascertain what was the belief of those to whom the message was first communicated? And can the belief which existed in their minds be derived to ours, by our sitting in judgment upon the reasons which produced it?

The surest way in which the belief and knowledge of the men of former ages can be transmitted to their descendants, is through the medium of written testimony; and it is fortunate for us, that the records of the Christian religion are not the only historical documents which have come down to us. A great variety of information has come down to us in this way; and a great part of that information is as firmly believed, and as confidently proceeded upon, as if the thing narrated had happened within the limits of our eye-sight. No man doubts the invasion of Britain by Julius Cæsar; and no man doubts, therefore, that

a conviction of the truth of past events may be fairly produced in the mind by the instrumentality of a written memorial. This is the kind of evidence which is chiefly appealed to for the truth of ancient history ; and it is counted satisfying evidence for all that part of it, which is received and depended upon.

In laying before the reader, then, the evidence for the truth of Christianity, we do not call his mind to any singular or unprecedented exercise of its faculties. We call him to pronounce upon the credibility of written documents, which profess to have been published at a certain age, and by certain authors. The inquiry involves in it no principle which is not appealed to every day in questions of ordinary criticism. To sit in judgment on the credibility of a written document, is a frequent and familiar exercise of the understanding with literary men. It is fortunate for the human mind, when so interesting a question as its religious faith can be placed under the tribunal of such evidence as it is competent to pronounce upon. It was fortunate for those to whom Christianity (a professed communication from heaven) was first addressed, that they could decide upon the genuineness of the communication by such familiar and every-day principles, as the marks of truth or falsehood in the human bearers of that communication. And it is fortunate for us, that when, after that communication has assumed the form of a historical document, we can pronounce upon the degree of credit which should be attached to it, by the very same exercise of mind which we so confidently engage in, when sitting in examination upon the other historical documents that have come down to us from antiquity.

If two historical documents possess equal degrees of evidence, they should produce equal degrees of conviction. But if the object of the one be to establish some

fact connected with our religious faith, while the object of the other is to establish some fact, about which we feel no other interest, than that general curiosity which is gratified by the solution of any question in literature, this difference in the object produces a difference of effect in the feelings and tendencies of the mind. It is impossible for the mind, while it inquires into the evidence of a Christian document, to abstain from all reference to the important conclusion of the inquiry. And this will necessarily mingle its influence with the arguments which engage its attention. It may be of importance to attend to the peculiar feelings which are thus given to the investigation, and in how far they have affected the impression of the Christian argument.

We know it to be the opinion of some, that in this way an undue advantage has been given to that argument. Instead of a pure question of truth, it has been made a question of sentiment, and the wishes of the heart have mingled with the exercises of the understanding. There is a class of men who may feel disposed to overrate its evidences, because they are anxious to give every support and stability to a system, which they conceive to be most intimately connected with the dearest hopes and wishes of humanity; because their imagination is carried away by the sublimity of its doctrines, or their heart engaged by that amiable morality which is so much calculated to improve and adorn the face of society.

Now, we are ready to admit, that as the object of the inquiry is not the character, but the truth of Christianity, the philosopher should be careful to protect his mind from the delusion of its charms. He should separate the exercises of the understanding from the tendencies of the fancy or of the heart. He should be prepared to follow the light of evidence, though it may lead him to conclusions the most painful and melancholy. He should train his mind

to all the hardihood of abstract and unfeeling intelligence. He should give up every thing to the supremacy of argument, and be able to renounce, without a sigh, all the tenderest prepossessions of infancy, the moment that truth demands of him the sacrifice. Let it be remembered, however, that while one species of prejudice operates in favour of Christianity, another prejudice operates against it. There is a class of men who are repelled from the investigation of its evidences, because in their minds Christianity is allied with the weakness of superstition; and they feel that they are descending, when they bring down their attention to a subject which engrosses so much respect and admiration from the vulgar.

It appears to us, that the peculiar feeling which the sacredness of the subject gives to the inquirer, is, upon the whole, unfavourable to the impression of the Christian argument. Had the subject not been sacred, and had the same testimony been given to the facts that are connected with it, we are satisfied, that the history of Jesus in the New Testament would have been looked upon as the best supported by evidence of any history that has come down to us. It would assist us in appreciating the evidence for the truth of the gospel history, if we could conceive for a moment, that Jesus, instead of being the founder of a new religion, had been merely the founder of a new school of philosophy, and that the different histories which have come down to us had merely represented him as an extraordinary person, who had rendered himself illustrious among his countrymen by the wisdom of his sayings, and the beneficence of his actions. We venture to say, that had this been the case, a tenth part of the testimony which has actually been given, would have been enough to satisfy us. Had it been a question of mere erudition, where neither a predilection in favour of a religion, nor an antipathy against it, could have impressed a bias in any one

direction, the testimony, both in weight and in quantity, would have been looked upon as quite unexampled in the whole compass of ancient literature.

To form a fair estimate of the strength and decisiveness of the Christian argument, we should, if possible, divest ourselves of all reference to religion, and view the truth of the gospel history, purely as a question of erudition. If at the outset of the investigation we have a prejudice against the Christian religion, the effect is obvious; and without any refinement of explanation, we see at once how such a prejudice must dispose us to annex suspicion and distrust to the testimony of the Christian writers. But even when the prejudice is on the side of Christianity, the effect is unfavourable on a mind that is at all scrupulous about the rectitude of its opinions. In these circumstances, the mind gets suspicious of itself. It feels a predilection, and becomes apprehensive lest this predilection may have disposed it to cherish a particular conclusion, independently of the evidences by which it is supported. Were it a mere speculative question, in which the interests of man, and the attachments of his heart, had no share, he would feel greater confidence in the result of his investigation. But it is difficult to separate the moral impressions of piety, and it is no less difficult to calculate their precise influence on the exercises of the understanding. In the complex sentiment of attachment and conviction, which he annexes to the Christian religion, he finds it difficult to say, how much is due to the tendencies of the heart, and how much is due to the pure and unmingled influence of argument. His very anxiety for the truth, disposes him to overrate the circumstances which give a bias to his understanding, and through the whole process of the inquiry, he feels a suspicion and an embarrassment, which he would not have felt, had it been a question of ordinary erudition.

The same suspicion which he attaches to himself, he will be ready to attach to all whom he conceives to be in similar circumstances. Now, every author who writes in defence of Christianity is supposed to be a Christian; and this, in spite of every argument to the contrary, has the actual effect of weakening the impression of his testimony. This suspicion affects, in a more remarkable degree, the testimony of the first writers on the side of Christianity. In opposition to it, you have no doubt, to allege the circumstances under which the testimony was given; the tone of sincerity which runs through the performance of the author; the concurrence of other testimonies; the persecutions which were sustained in adhering to them, and which can be accounted for on no other principle, than the power of conscience and conviction; and the utter impossibility of imposing a false testimony on the world, had they even been disposed to do it. Still there is a lurking suspicion, which often survives all this strength of argument, and which it is difficult to get rid of, even after it has been demonstrated to be completely unreasonable. He is a Christian. He is one of the party. Am I an infidel? I persist in distrusting the testimony. Am I a Christian? I rejoice in the strength of it; but this very joy becomes matter of suspicion to a scrupulous inquirer. He feels something more than the concurrence of his belief in the testimony of the writer. He catches the infection of his piety and his moral sentiments. In addition to the acquiescence of the understanding, there is a *con amore* feeling both in himself, and in his author, which he had rather been without, because he finds it difficult to compute the precise amount of its influence; and the consideration of this restrains him from that clear and decided conclusion, which he would infallibly have landed in, had it been purely a secular investigation.

There is something in the very sacredness of the sub-

ject, which intimidates the understanding, and restrains it from making the same firm and confident application of its faculties, which it would have felt itself perfectly warranted to do, had it been a question of ordinary history. Had the apostles been the disciples of some eminent philosopher, and the fathers of the church, their immediate successors in the office of presiding over the discipline and instruction of the numerous schools which they had established, this would have given a secular complexion to the argument, which we think would have been more satisfying to the mind, and have impressed upon it a closer and more familiar conviction of the history in question. We should have immediately brought it into comparison with the history of other philosophers, and could not have failed to recognize, that, in minuteness of information, in weight and quantity of evidence, in the concurrence of numerous and independent testimonies, and in the total absence of every circumstance that should dispose us to annex suspicion to the account which lay before us, it far surpassed any thing that had come down to us from antiquity. It so happens, however, that, instead of being the history of a philosopher, it is the history of a prophet. The veneration we annex to the sacredness of such a character, mingles with our belief in the truth of his history. From a question of simple truth, it becomes a question in which the heart is interested; and the subject from that moment assumes a certain holiness and mystery, which veils the strength of the argument, and takes off from that familiar and intimate conviction which we annex to the far less authenticated histories of profane authors.

It may be further observed, that every part of the Christian argument has been made to undergo a most severe scrutiny. The same degree of evidence which in questions of ordinary history, commands the easy and universal acquiescence of every inquirer, has, in the subject before

us, been taken most thoroughly to pieces, and pursued, both by friends and enimies, into all its ramifications. The effect of this is unquestionable. The genuineness and authenticity of the profane historian, are admitted upon much inferior evidence to what we can adduce for the different pieces which make up the New Testament: And why? Because the evidence has been hitherto thought sufficient, and the genuineness and authenticity have never been questioned. Not so with the Gospel history. Though its evidence is precisely the same in kind, and vastly superior in degree to the evidence for the history of the profane writer, its evidence has been questioned, and the very circumstance of its being questioned has annexed a suspicion to it. At all points of the question, there has been a struggle and a controversy. Every ignorant objection, and every rash and petulant observation, has been taken up and commented upon by the defenders of Christianity. There has at last been so much said about it, that a general feeling of insecurity is apt to accompany the whole investigation. There has been so much fighting, that Christianity now is looked upon as debatable ground. Other books, where the evidence is much inferior, but which have had the advantage of never being questioned, are received as of established authority. It is striking to observe the perfect confidence with which an infidel will quote a passage from an ancient historian. He perhaps does not overrate the credit due to him. But present him with a tabellated and comparative view of all the evidences that can be adduced for the gospel of Matthew, and any profane historian, which he chooses to fix upon, and let each distinct evidence be discussed upon no other principle than the ordinary and approved principles of criticism, we assure him that the sacred history would far outweigh the profane in the number and value of its testimonies.

In illustration of the above remarks, we can refer to the experience of those who have attended to this examination. We ask them to recollect the satisfaction which they felt, when they came to those parts of the examination, where the argument assumes a secular complexion. Let us take the testimony of Tacitus for an example. He asserts the execution of our Saviour in the reign of Tiberius, and under the procuratorship of Pilate; the temporary check, which this gave to his religion; its revival, and the progress it had made, not only over Judea, but to the city of Rome. Now all this is attested in the Annals of Tacitus. But it is also attested in a far more direct and circumstantial manner in the annals of another author, in a book entitled the *History of the Acts of the Apostles by the Evangelist Luke.* Both of these performances carry on the very face of them the appearance of unsuspicious and well-authenticated documents. But there are several circumstances, in which the testimony of Luke possesses a decided advantage over the testimony of Tacitus. He was the companion of these very apostles. He was an eye witness to many of the events recorded by him. He had the advantage over the Roman historian in time and in place, and in personal knowledge of many of the circumstances in his history. The genuineness of his publication, too, and the time of its appearance, are far better established, and by precisely that kind of argument which is held decisive in every other question of erudition. Besides all this, we have the testimony of at least five of the Christian fathers, all of whom had the same, or a greater, advantage in point of time than Tacitus, and who had a much nearer and readier access to original sources of information. Now, how comes it that the testimony of Tacitus, a distant and later historian, should yield such delight and satisfaction to the inquirer, while all the antecedent testimony (which, by every principle of approved

criticism, is much stronger than the other) should produce an impression that is comparatively languid and ineffectual? It is owing in a great measure, to the principle to which we have already alluded. There is a sacredness annexed to the subject, so long as it is under the pen of fathers and evangelists, and this very sacredness takes away from the freedom and confidence of the argument. The moment that it is taken up by a profane author, the spell which held the understanding in some degree of restraint is dissipated. We now tread on the more familiar ground of ordinary history; and the evidence for the truth of the Gospel appears more assimilated to that evidence, which brings home to our conviction the particulars of the Greek and Roman story.

To say that Tacitus was upon this subject a disinterested historian, is not enough to explain the preference which you give to his testimony. There is no subject in which the triumph of the Christian argument is more conspicuous, than the moral qualifications which give credit to the testimony of its witnesses. We have every possible evidence, that there could be neither mistake nor falsehood in their testimony; a much greater quantity of evidence, indeed, than can actually be produced to establish the credibility of any other historian. Now all we ask is, that where an exception to the veracity of any historian is removed, you restore him to that degree of credit and influence which he ought to have possessed, had no such exception been made. In no case has an exception to the credibility of an author been more triumphantly removed, than in the case of the early Christian writers; and yet, as a proof that there really exists some such delusion as we have been labouring to demonstrate, though our eyes are perfectly open to the integrity of the Christian witnesses, there is still a disposition to give the preference to the secular historian. When Tacitus is placed by the side

of the evangelist Luke, even after the decisive argument, which establishes the credit of the latter historian has convinced the understanding, there remains a tendency in the mind to annex a confidence to the account of the Roman writer, which is altogether disproportioned to the relative merits of his testimony.

Let us suppose, for the sake of farther illustration, that Tacitus had included some more particulars in his testimony, and that, in addition to the execution of our Saviour, he had asserted, in round and unqualified terms, that this said Christus had risen from the dead, and was seen alive by some hundreds of his acquaintances. Even this would not have silenced altogether the cavils of enemies, but it would have reclaimed many an infidel; been exulted in by many a sincere Christian; and made to occupy a foremost place in many a book upon the evidences of our religion. Are we to forget all the while, that we are in actual possession of much stronger testimony? that we have the concurrence of eight or ten contemporary authors, most of whom had actually seen Christ after the great event of his resurrection? that the veracity of these authors, and the genuineness of their respective publications, are established on grounds much stronger than have ever been alledged in behalf of Tacitus, or any ancient author? Whence this unaccountable preference of Tacitus? Upon every received principle of criticism, we are bound to annex greater confidence to the testimony of the apostles. It is vain to recur to the imputation of its being an interested testimony. This the apologists for Christianity undertake to disprove, and actually have disproved it, and that by a much greater quantity of evidence than would be held perfectly decisive in a question of common history. If after this there should remain any lurking sentiment of diffidence or suspicion, it is entirely resolvable into some such principle as I have already alluded to.

It is to be treated as a mere feeling,—a delusion which should not be admitted to have any influence on the convictions of the understanding.

The principle which we have been attempting to expose, is found, in fact, to run through every part of the argument, and to accompany the inquirer through all the branches of the investigation. The authenticity of the different books of the New Testament forms a very important inquiry, wherein the object of the Christian apologist is to prove, that they were really written by their professed authors. In proof of this, there is an uninterrupted series of testimony from the days of the apostles; and it was not to be expected, that a point so isoteric to the Christian society could have attracted the attention of profane authors, till the religion of Jesus, by its progress in the world, had rendered itself conspicuous. It is not then till about eighty years after the publication of the different pieces, that we meet with the testimony of Celsus, an avowed enemy to Christianity, and who asserts, upon the strength of its general notoriety, that the historical parts of the New Testament were written by the disciples of our Saviour. This is very decisive evidence. But how does it happen, that it should throw a clearer gleam of light and satisfaction over the mind of the inquirer, than he had yet experienced in the whole train of his investigation? Whence that disposition to underrate the antecedent testimony of the Christian writers? Talk not, of theirs' being an interested testimony; for, in point of fact, the same disposition operates, after reason is convinced that the suspicion is totally unfounded. What we contend for is, that this indifference to the testimony of the Christian writers implies a dereliction of principles, which we apply with the utmost confidence to all similar inquiries.

The effects of this same principle are perfectly dis-

cernible in the writings of even our most judicious apologists. We offer no reflection against the assiduous Lardner, who, in his credibility of the Gospel history, presents us with a collection of testimonies which should make every Christian proud of his religion. In his evidence for the authenticity of the different pieces which make up the New Testament, he begins with the oldest of the fathers, some of whom were the intimate companions of the original writers. According to our view of the matter, he should have dated the commencement of his argument from a higher point, and begun with the testimonies of these original writers to one another. In the second Epistle of Peter, there is a distinct reference made to the writings of Paul; and in the Acts of the Apostles, there is a reference made to one of the four Gospels. Had Peter, instead of being an apostle, ranked only with the fathers of the church, and had his epistle not been admitted into the canon of scripture, this testimony of his would have had a place in the catalogue, and been counted peculiarly valuable, both for its precision and its antiquity. There is certainly nothing in the estimation he enjoyed, or in the circumstances of his epistle being bound up with the other books of the New Testament, which ought to impair the credit of his testimony. But in effect, his testimony does make a weaker impression on the mind, than a similar testimony from Barnabas, or Clement, or Polycarp. It certainly ought not to do it, and there is a delusion in the preference that is thus given to the latter writers. It is, in fact, another example of the principle which we have been so often insisting upon. What profane authors are in reference to Christian authors at large, the fathers of the church are in reference to the original writers of the New Testament. In contradiction to every approved principle, we prefer the distant and later testimony, to the testimony of writers, who carry as much evidence and legitimate

authority along with them, and who only differ from others in being nearer the original sources of information. We neglect and undervalue the evidence which the New Testament itself furnishes, and rest the whole of the argument upon the external and superinduced testimony of subsequent authors.

A great deal of all this is owing to the manner in which the defence of Christianity has been conducted by its friends and supporters. They have given too much into the suspicions of the opposite party. They have yielded their minds to the infection of their scepticism, and maintained, through the whole process, a caution and a delicacy which they often carry to a degree that is excessive; and by which, in fact, they have done injustice to their own arguments. Some of them begin with the testimony of Tacitus as a first principle, and pursue the investigation upwards, as if the evidence that we collect from the annals of the Roman historian were stronger than that of the Christian writers who flourished nearer the scene of the investigation, and whose credibility can be established on grounds which are altogether independent of his testimony. In this way, they come at last to the credibility of the New Testament writers, but by a lengthened and circuitous procedure. The reader feels as if the argument were diluted at every step in the process of derivation, and his faith in the Gospel history is much weaker than his faith in histories that are far less authenticated. Bring Tacitus and the New Testament to an immediate comparison, and subject them both to the touchstone of ordinary and received principles, and it will be found that the latter leaves the former out of sight in all the marks, and characters, and evidences of an authentic history. The truth of the Gospel stands on a much firmer and more independent footing, than many of its defenders would dare to give us any conception of. They

want that boldness of argument which the merits of the question entitle them to assume. They ought to maintain a more decided front to their adversaries, and tell them, that, in the New Testament itself—in the concurrence of its numerous, and distant, and independent authors—in the uncontradicted authority which it has maintained from the earliest times of the church—in the total inability of the bitterest adversaries of our religion to impeach its credibility—in the genuine characters of honesty and fairness which it carries on the very face of it; that in these, and in every thing else, which can give validity to the written history of past times, there is a weight and a splendour of evidence, which the testimony of Tacitus cannot confirm, and which the absence of that testimony could not have diminished.

If it were necessary, in a court of justice, to ascertain the circumstances of a certain transaction which happened in a particular neighbourhood, the obvious expedient would be to examine the agents and the eye-witnesses of that transaction. If six or eight concurred in giving the same testimony—if there was no appearance of collusion amongst them—if they had the manner and aspect of creditable men—above all, if this testimony were made public, and not a single individual, from the numerous spectators of the transaction alluded to, stept forward to falsify it, then, we apprehend, the proof would be looked upon as complete. Other witnesses might be summoned from a distance to give in their testimony, not of what they saw, but of what they heard upon the subject; but their concurrence, though a happy enough circumstance, would never be looked upon as any material addition to the evidence already brought forward. Another court of justice might be held in a distant country, and years after the death of the original witnesses. It might have occasion to verify the same transaction, and for this purpose

might call in the only evidence which it was capable of collecting—the testimony of men who lived after the transaction in question, and at a great distance from the place where it happened. There would be no hesitation, in ordinary cases, about the relative value of the two testimonies; and the record of the first court could be appealed to by posterity as by far the more valuable document, and far more decisive of the point in controversy. Now, what we complain of, is, that in the instance before us this principle is reversed. The report of hearsay witnesses is held in higher estimation than the report of the original agents and spectators. The most implicit credit is given to the testimony of the distant and later historians, and the testimony of the original witnesses is received with as much distrust as if they carried the marks of villany and imposture upon their foreheads. The genuineness of the first record can be established by a much greater weight and variety of evidence, than the genuineness of the second. Yet all the suspicion that we feel upon this subject annexes to the former; and the apostles and evangelists, with every evidence in their favour which it is in the power of testimony to furnish, are, in fact, degraded from the place which they ought to occupy among the accredited historians of past times.

The above observations may help to prepare the inquirer for forming a just and impartial estimate of the merits of the Christian testimony. His great object should be to guard against every bias of the understanding. The general idea is, that a predilection in favour of Christianity may lead him to overrate the argument. We believe that if every unfair tendency of the mind could be subjected to a rigorous computation, it would be found, that the combined operation of them all has the effect of impressing a bias in a contrary direction. All we wish for, is, that the arguments which are held decisive in other historical

questions, should not be looked upon as nugatory when applied to the investigation of those facts which are connected with the truth and establishment of the Christian religion, that every prepossession should be swept away, and room left for the understanding, to expatiate without fear, and without incumbrance.

CHAP. II.

ON THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE DIFFERENT BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

THE argument for the truth of the different facts recorded in the gospel history, resolves itself into four parts. In the first, it shall be our object to prove, that the different pieces which make up the New Testament, were written by the authors whose names they bear, and the age which is commonly assigned to them. In the second, we shall exhibit the internal marks of truth and honesty, which may be gathered from the compositions themselves. In the third, we shall press upon the reader the known situation and history of the authors, as satisfying proofs of the veracity with which they delivered themselves. And, in the fourth, we shall lay before them the additional and subsequent testimonies, by which the narrative of the original writers is supported.

In every point of the investigation, we shall meet with examples of the principle which we have already alluded to. We have said, that if two distinct inquiries be set on foot, where the object of the one is to settle some point of sacred history, and the object of the other is to settle some point of profane history; the mind acquiesces in a much smaller quantity of evidence in the latter case than it does in the former. If this be right, (and to a certain degree it undoubtedly is,) then it is incumbent on the defender of Christianity to bring forward a greater quantity of evidence

than would be deemed sufficient in a question of common literature, and to demand the acquiescence of his reader upon the strength of this superior evidence. If it be not right beyond a certain degree—and if there be a tendency in the mind to carry it beyond that degree, then this tendency is founded upon a delusion, and it is well that the reader should be apprised of its existence, that he may protect himself from its influence. The superior quantity of evidence which we can bring forward, will, in this case, all go to augment the positive effect upon his convictions; and he will rejoice to perceive, that he is far safer in believing what has been handed down to him of the history of Jesus Christ, and the doctrine of his apostles, than in believing what he has never doubted—the history of Alexander, and the doctrine of Socrates. Could all the marks of veracity, and the list of subsequent testimonies, be exhibited to the eye of the reader in parallel columns, it would enable him, at one glance, to form a complete estimate. We shall have occasion to call his attention to this so often, that we may appear to many of our readers to have expatiated upon our introductory principle to a degree that is tiresome and unnecessary. We conceive, however, that it is the best and most perspicuous way of putting the argument.

I. The different pieces which make up the New Testament, were written by the authors whose names they bear, and at the time which is commonly assigned to them.

After the long slumber of the middle ages, the curiosity of the human mind was awakened, and felt its attention powerfully directed to those old writings, which have survived the waste of so many centuries. It were a curious speculation to ascertain the precise quantity of evidence which lay in the information of these old documents. And it may help us in our estimate, first to suppose, that in the researches of that period, there was only one com-

position found which professed to be a narrative of past times. A number of circumstances can be assigned, which might give a certain degree of probability to the information even of this solitary and unsupported document. There is, first, the general consideration, that the principle upon which a man feels himself induced to write a true history, is of more frequent and powerful operation, than the principle upon which a man feels himself induced to offer a false or a disguised representation of facts to the world. This affords a general probability on the side of the document in question being a true narrative; and there may be some particulars connected with the appearance of the performance itself, which might strengthen this probability. We may not be able to discover in the story itself any inducement which the man could have in publishing it, if it were mainly and substantially false. We might see an expression of honesty, which it is in the power of written language, as well as of spoken language, to convey. We might see that there was nothing monstrous or improbable in the narrative itself. And, without enumerating every particular calculated to give it the impression of truth, we may, in the progress of our inquiries, have ascertained, that copies of this manuscript were to be found in many places, and in different parts of the world, proving, by the evidence of its diffusion, the general esteem in which it was held by the readers of past ages. This gives us the testimony of these readers to the value of the performance; and as we are supposing it is a history, and not a work of imagination, it could only be valued on the principle of the information which was laid before them being true. In this way a solitary document, transmitted to us from a remote antiquity, might gain credit in the world, though it had been lost sight of for many ages, and only brought to light by

the revival of a literary spirit, which had lain dormant during a long period of history.

We can farther suppose, that, in the progress of these researches, another manuscript was discovered, having the same characters, and possessing the same separate and original marks of truth, with the former. If they both touched upon the same period of history, and gave testimony to the same events, it is plain that a stronger evidence for the truth of these events would be afforded, than what it was in the power of either of the testimonies taken separately to supply. The separate circumstances which gave a distinct credibility to each of the testimonies are added together, and give a so much higher credibility to those points of information upon which they deliver a common testimony. This is the case when the testimonies carry in them the appearance of being independent of one another. And even when the one is derived from the other, it still affords an accession to the evidence; because the author of the subsequent testimony gives us the distinct assertion, that he believed in the truth of the original testimony.

The evidence may be strengthened still farther, by the accession of a third manuscript, and a third testimony. All the separate circumstances which confer credibility upon any one document, even though it stands alone and unsupported by any other, combine themselves into a much stronger body of evidence, when we have obtained the concurrence of several. If, even in the case of a single narrative, a probability lies on the side of its being true, from the multitude and diffusion of copies, and from the air of truth and honesty discernible in the composition itself, the probability is heightened by the coincidence of several narratives, all of them possessing the same claims upon our belief. If it be improbable that one should be written for the purpose of imposing a falsehood upon the

world, it is still more improbable that many should be written, all of them conspiring to the same perverse and unnatural object. No one can doubt, at least, that of the multitude of written testimonies which have come down to us, the true must greatly preponderate over the false; and that the deceitful principle, though it exists sometimes, could never operate to such an extent, as to carry any great or general imposition in the face of all the documents which are before us. The supposition must be extended much farther than we have yet carried it, before we reach the degree of evidence and of testimony, of which, on many points of ancient history, we are at this moment in actual possession. Many documents have been collected, professing to be written at different times, and by men of different countries. In this way, a great body of ancient literature has been formed, from which we can collect many points of evidence, too tedious to enumerate. Do we find the express concurrence of several authors to the same piece of history? Do we find, what is still more impressive, events formally announced in one narrative, not told over again, but implied and proceeded upon as true in another? Do we find the succession of history, through a series of ages, supported in a way that is natural and consistent? Do we find those compositions which profess a higher antiquity, appealed to by those which profess a lower? These, and a number of other points, which meet every scholar who betakes himself to the actual investigation, give a most warm and living character of reality to the history of past times. There is a perversity of mind which may resist all this. There is no end to the fancies of scepticism. We may plead in vain the number of written testimonies, their artless coincidence, and the perfect undesignedness of manner by which they often supply the circumstances that serve both to guide and satisfy the inquirer, and to throw light and support

upon one another. The infidel will still have something, behind which he can entrench himself; and his last supposition, monstrous and unnatural as it is, may be, that the whole of written history is a laborious fabrication, sustained for many ages, and concurred in by many individuals, with no other purpose than to enjoy the anticipated blunders of the men of future times, whom they had combined with so much dexterity to bewilder and lead astray.

If it were possible to summon up to the presence of the mind, the whole mass of spoken testimony, it would be found, that what was false bore a very small proportion to what was true. For many obvious reasons, the proportion of the false to the true must be also small in written testimony. Yet instances of falsehood occur in both; and the actual ability to separate the false from the true in written history, proves that historical evidence has its principles and its probabilities to go upon. There may be the natural signs of dishonesty. There may be the wildness and improbability of the narrative. There may be a total want of agreement on the part of other documents. There may be the silence of every author for ages after the pretended date of the manuscript in question. There may be all these, in sufficient abundance, to convict the manuscript of forgery and falsehood. This has actually been done in several instances. The skill and discernment of the human mind upon the subject of historical evidence, have been improved by the exercise. The few cases in which sentence of condemnation has been given, are so many testimonies to the competency of the tribunal which has sat in judgment over them, and give a stability to their verdict, when any document is approved of. It is a peculiar subject, and the men who stand at a distance from it may multiply their suspicions and their scepticism at pleasure; but no intelligent man ever entered into the details, without feeling the most fa-

miliar and satisfying conviction of that credit and confidence which it is in the power of historical evidence to bestow.

Now, to apply this to the object of our present division, which is to ascertain the age of the document, and the person who is the author of it. These are points of information which may be collected from the performance itself. They may be found in the body of the composition, or they may be more formally announced in the title page—and every time that the book is referred to by its title, or the name of the author and age of the publication are announced in any other document that has come down to us, these points of information receive additional proof from the testimony of subsequent writers.

The New Testament is bound up in one volume, but we would be underrating its evidence if we regarded it only as one testimony, and that the truth of the facts recorded in it rested upon the testimony of one historian. It is not one publication, but a collection of several publications, which are ascribed to different authors, and made their first appearance in different parts of the world. To fix the date of their appearance, it is necessary to institute a separate inquiry for each publication; and it is the unexpected testimony of all subsequent writers, that two of the Gospels and several of the Epistles, were written by the immediate disciples of our Saviour, and published in their lifetime. Celsus, an enemy of the Christian faith, refers to the affairs of Jesus as written by his disciples. He never thinks of disputing the fact; and from the extracts which he makes for the purpose of criticism, there can be no doubt in the mind of the reader, that it is one or other of the four Gospels to which he refers. The single testimony of Celsus may be considered as decisive of the fact, that the story of Jesus & of his life was actually written by his disciples. Celsus writes about a hundred years

after the alleged time of the publication of this story; but that it was written by the companions of this Jesus, is a fact which he never thinks of disputing. He takes it up upon the strength of its general notoriety, and the whole history of that period furnishes nothing that can attach any doubt or suspicion to this circumstance. Referring to a principle already taken notice of, had it been the history of a philosopher instead of a prophet, its authenticity would have been admitted without any formal testimony to that effect. It would have been admitted, so to speak, upon the mere existence of the title-page, combined with this circumstance, that the whole course of history or tradition does not furnish us with a single fact, leading us to believe that the correctness of this title-page was ever questioned. It would have been admitted, not because it was asserted by subsequent writers, but because they made no assertion upon the subject, because they never thought of converting it into a matter of discussion, and because their occasional references to the book in question would be looked upon as carrying in them a tacit acknowledgment, that it was the very same book which it professed to be at the present day. The distinct assertion of Celsus, that the pieces in question were written by the companions of Jesus, though even at the distance of a hundred years, is an argument in favour of their authenticity, which cannot be alleged for many of the most esteemed compositions of antiquity. It is the addition of a formal testimony to that kind of general evidence, which is founded upon the tacit or implied concurrence of subsequent writers, and which is held to be perfectly decisive in similar cases.

Had the pieces, which make up the New Testament, been the only documents of past times, the mere existence of a pretension to such an age, and to such an author, resting on their own information, would have been sustained

as a certain degree of evidence, that the real age and the real author had been assigned to them. But we have the testimony of subsequent authors to the same effect; and it is to be remarked, that it is by far the most crowded, and the most closely sustained series of testimonies, of which we have any example in the whole field of ancient history. When we assigned the testimony of Celsus, it is not to be supposed that this is the very first which occurs after the days of the apostles. The blank of a hundred years betwixt the publication of the original story and the publication of Celsus, is filled up by antecedent testimonies, which in all fairness, should be counted more decisive of the point in question. They are the testimonies of Christian writers, and, in as far as a nearer opportunity of obtaining correct information is concerned, they should be held more valuable than the testimony of Celsus. These references are of three kinds:—*First*, In some cases, their reference to the books of the New Testament is made in the form of an express quotation, and the author particularly named. *Secondly*, In other cases, the quotation is made without reference to the particular author, and ushered in by the general words, "*as it is written.*" And, *Thirdly*, There are innumerable allusions to the different parts of the new Testament, scattered over all the writings of the earlier fathers. In this last case there is no express citation; but we have the sentiment, the turn of expression, the very words of the New Testament, repeated so often, and by such a number of different writers, as to leave no doubt upon the mind, that they were copied from one common original, which was at that period held in high reverence and estimation. In pursuing the train of references, we do not meet with a single chasm from the days of the original writers. Not to repeat what we have already made some allusion to, the testimonies of the original writers to one another, we proceed to assert, that

some of the fathers, whose writings have come down to us, were the companions of the apostles, and are even named in the books of the New Testament. St. Clement, bishop of Rome, is, with the concurrence of all ancient authors, the same whom Paul mentions in his epistle to the Philippians. In his epistle to the church of Corinth, which was written in the name of the whole church of Rome, he refers to the first epistle of Paul to the former church. "Take into your hands the epistle of the blessed Paul the apostle." He then makes a quotation, which is to be found in Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians. Could Clement have done this to the Corinthians themselves, had no such epistle been in existence? And is not this an undoubted testimony, not merely from the mouth of Clement, but on the part of the churches both of Rome and Corinth, to the authenticity of such an epistle? There are in this same epistle of Clement several quotations of the second kind, which confirm the existence of some other books of the New Testament; and a multitude of allusions or references of the third kind, to the writings of the evangelist, the Acts of the Apostles, and a great many of those epistles which have been admitted into the New Testament. We have similar testimonies from some more of the fathers, who lived and conversed with Jesus Christ. Besides many references of the second and third kind, we have also other instances of the same kind of testimony, which Clement gave to St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians, than which nothing can be conceived more indisputable. Ignatius, writing to the church of Ephesus, takes notice of St. Paul's epistle to that church; and Polycarp, an immediate disciple of the apostles, makes the same express reference to St. Paul's epistle to the Philippians, in a letter addressed to that people. In carrying our attention down from the apostolical fathers, we follow an uninterrupted series of testimonies to the authenticity

of the canonical scriptures. They get more numerous and circumstantial as we proceed—a thing to be expected from the progress of Christianity, and the greater multitude of writers, who came forward in its defence and illustration.

In pursuing the series of writers from the days of the apostles down to about 150 years after the publication of the pieces which make up the New Testament, we come to Tertullian, of whom Lardner says, "that there are perhaps more and longer quotations of the small volume of the New Testament in this one Christian author, than of all the works of Cicero, though of so uncommon excellence for thought and style, in the writers of all characters for several ages."

We feel ourselves exposed, in this part of our investigation, to the suspicion which adheres to every Christian testimony. We have already made some attempts to analyse that suspicion into its ingredients, and we conceive, that the circumstance of the Christians being an interested party, is only one, and not perhaps the principal of these ingredients. At all events, this may be the proper place for disposing of that one ingredient, and for offering a few general observations on the strength of the Christian testimony.

In estimating the value of any testimony, there are two distinct subjects of consideration; the person who gives the testimony, and the people to whom the testimony is addressed. It is quite needless to enlarge on the resources which, in the present instance, we derive from both these considerations, and how much each of them contributes to the triumph and solidity of the Christian argument. In as far as the people, who give the testimony are concerned, how could they be mistaken in their account of the books of the New Testament, when some of them lived in the same age with the original writers, and were their intimate acquaintances, and when all of

them had the benefit of an uncontrolled series of evidence, reaching down from the date of the earliest publications to their own times? Or, how can we suspect that they falsified, when there runs through their writings the same tone of plainness and sincerity, which is allowed to stamp the character of authenticity on other productions; and, above all, when, upon the strength even of heathen testimony, we conclude, that many of them, by their sufferings and death, gave the highest evidence that man can give, of his speaking under the influence of a real and honest conviction? In as far as the people who received the testimony are concerned, to what other circumstances can we ascribe their concurrence, than to the truth of that testimony? In what way was it possible to deceive them upon a point of general notoriety? The books of the New Testament are referred to by the ancient fathers, as writings generally known and respected by the Christians of that period. If they were obscure writings, or had no existence at the time, how can we account for the credit and authority of those fathers who appealed to them, and had the effrontery to insult their fellow Christians by a falsehood so palpable, and so easily detected? Allow them to be capable of this treachery, we have still to explain, how the people came to be the dupes of so glaring an imposition; how they could be persuaded to give up every thing for a religion, whose teachers were so unprincipled as to deceive them, and so unwise as to commit themselves upon ground where it was impossible to elude discovery. Could Clement have dared to refer the people of Corinth to an epistle said to be received by themselves, and which had no existence? or, could he have referred the Christians at large to writings which they never heard of. And it was not enough to maintain the semblance of truth with the people of their own party. Where were the Jews all the time? and how was it

possible to escape the correction of these keen and vigilant observers? We mistake the matter much, if we think, that Christianity at that time was making its insidious way in silence and in secrecy, through a listless and unconcerned public. All history gives an opposite representation. The passions and curiosity of men were quite upon the alert. The popular enthusiasm had been excited on both sides of the question. It had drawn the attention of established authorities in different provinces of the empire, and the merits of the Christian cause had become a matter of frequent and formal discussion in courts of judicature. If, in these circumstances, the Christian writers had the hardihood to venture upon a falsehood, it would have been upon safer ground than what they actually adopted. They would never have hazarded to assert what was so open to contradiction, as the existence of books held in reverence among all the churches, and which nobody either in or out of these churches ever heard of. They would never have been so unwise as to commit in this way a cause, which had not a single circumstance to recommend it but its truth and its evidences.

The falsehood of the Christian testimony on this point, would carry along with it a concurrence of circumtances, each of which is the strangest and most unprecedented that ever was heard of. First, That men, who sustained in their writings all the characters of sincerity, and many of whom submitted to martyrdom, as the highest pledge of sincerity which can possibly be given, should have been capable of falsehood at all. Second, That this tendency to falsehood should have been exercised so unwisely, as to appear in an assertion perfectly open to detection, and which could be so readily converted to the discredit of that religion, which it was the favourite ambition of their lives to promote and establish in the world. Third, That this testimony could have gained the con-

concurrence of the people to whom it was addressed, and that, with their eyes perfectly open to its falsehood, they should be ready to make the sacrifice of life and of fortune in supporting it. Fourth, That this testimony should never have been contradicted by the Jews, and that they should have neglected so effectual an opportunity of disgracing a religion, the progress of which they contemplated with so much jealousy and alarm. Add to this, that it is not the testimony of one writer which we are making to pass through the ordeal of so many difficulties. It is the testimony of many writers, who lived at different times and in different countries, and who add the very singular circumstance of their entire agreement with one another, to the other circumstances equally unaccountable, which we have just now enumerated. The falsehood of their united testimony is not to be conceived. It is a supposition which we are warranted to condemn, upon the strength of any one of the above improbabilities taken separately. But the fair way of estimating their effect upon the argument, is to take them jointly, and in the language of the doctrine of chances, to take the product of all the improbabilities into one another. The argument which this product furnishes for the truth of the Christian testimony, has, in strength and conclusiveness, no parallel in the whole compass of ancient literature.

The testimony of Celsus is looked upon as peculiarly valuable, because it is disinterested. But if this consideration gives so much weight to the testimony of Celsus, why should so much doubt and suspicion annex to the testimony of Christian writers, several of whom, before his time, have given a fuller and more express testimony to the authenticity of the Gospels? In the persecutions they sustained; in the obvious tone of sincerity and honesty which runs through their writings; in their general agreement upon this subject; in the multitude of their

followers, who never could have confided in men that ventured to commit themselves, by the assertion of what was obviously and notoriously false; in the check which the vigilance, both of Jews and Heathens, exercised over every Christian writer of that period,—in all these circumstances, they give every evidence of having delivered a fair and unpolluted testimony.

CHAP. III.

ON THE INTERNAL MARKS OF TRUTH AND HONESTY TO BE FOUND IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

II. We shall now look into the New Testament itself, and endeavour to lay before the reader the internal marks of truth and honesty, which are to be found in it.

Under this head, it may be right to insist upon the minute accuracy, which runs through all its allusions to the existing manners and circumstanees of the times. To appreciate the force of this argument, it would be right to attend to the peculiar situation of Judea, at the time of our Saviour. It was then under the dominion of the Roman emperors, and comes frequently under the notice of the profane historians of that period. From this source we derive a great variety of information, as to the manner in which the emperors conducted the government of their different provinces; what degree of indulgence was allowed to the religious opinions of the people whom they held in subjection; in how far they were suffered to live under the administration of their own laws; the power which was vested in the presidents of provinces; and a number of other circumstances relative to the criminal and civil jurisprudence of that period. In this way, there is a great number of different points in which the historians of the New Testament can be brought into comparison with the secular historians of the age. The history of Christ and his apostles contains innumerable references

to the state of public affairs. It is not the history of obscure and unnoticed individuals. They had attracted much of the public attention. They had been before the governors of the country. They had passed through the established forms of justice; and some of them underwent the trial and punishment of the times. It is easy to perceive, then, that the New Testament writers were led to allude to a number of these circumstances in the political history and constitution of the times, which came under the cognizance of ordinary historians. This was delicate ground for an inventor to tread upon; and particularly, if he lived at an age subsequent to the time of his history. He might in this case have fabricated a tale, by confining himself to the obscure and familiar incidents of private history; but it is only for a true and a contemporary historian, to sustain a continued accuracy, through his minute and numerous allusions to the public policy and government of the times.

Within the period of the Gospel history, Judea experienced a good many vicissitudes in the state of its government. At one time it formed part of a kingdom under Herod the Great. At another, it formed part of a smaller government under Archelaus. It after this came under the direct administration of a Roman governor; which form was again interrupted for several years, by the elevation of Herod Agrippa to the sovereign power, as exercised by his grandfather; and it is at last left in the form of a province at the conclusion of the evangelical history. There were also frequent changes in the political state of the countries adjacent to Judea; and which are often alluded to in the New Testament. A caprice of the reigning emperor often gave rise to a new form of government, and a new distribution of territory. It will be readily conceived, how much these perpetual fluctuations in the state of public affairs, both in Judea and its neigh-

bourhood, must add to the power and difficulty of that ordeal to which the Gospel history has been subjected.

On this part of the subject, there is no want of witnesses with whom to confront the writers of the New Testament. In addition to the Roman writers who have touched upon the affairs of Judea, we have the benefit of a Jewish historian, who has given us a professed history of his own country. From him, as was to be expected, we have a far greater quantity of copious and detailed narrative, relative to the internal affairs of Judea, to the manners of the people, and those particulars which are connected with their religious belief, and ecclesiastical constitution. With many, it will be supposed to add to the value of his testimony, that he was not a Christian; but that, on the other hand, we have every reason to believe him to have been a most zealous and determined enemy to the cause. It is really a most useful exercise, to pursue the harmony which subsists between the writers of the New Testament, and those Jewish and profane authors, with whom we bring them into comparison. Throughout the whole examination, our attention is confined to forms of justice; successions of governors in different provinces; manners, and political institutions. We are therefore apt to forget the sacredness of the subject; and we appeal to all, who have prosecuted this inquiry, if this circumstance is not favorable to their having a closer and more decided impression of the truth of the Gospel history. By instituting a comparison between the evangelists and contemporary authors, and restricting our attention to those points which come under the cognizance of ordinary history, we put the apostles and evangelists on the footing of ordinary historians; and it is for those, who have actually undergone the labour of this examination, to tell how much this circumstance adds to the impression of their authenticity. The mind gets emancipat-

ed from the peculiar delusion which attaches to the sacredness of the subject, and which has the undoubted effect of restraining the confidence of its inquiries. The argument assumes a secular complexion, and the writers of the New Testament are restored to that credit, with which the reader delivers himself up to any other historian, who has a much less weight and quantity of historical evidence in his favour.

We refer those readers who wish to prosecute this inquiry, to the first volume of Lardner's *Credibility of the Gospels*. We shall restrict ourselves to a few general observations on the nature and precise effect of the argument.

In the first place, the accuracy of the numerous allusions to the circumstances of that period, which the Gospel history embraces, forms a strong corroboration of that antiquity, which we have already assigned to its writers from external testimony. It amounts to a proof, that it is the production of authors who lived antecedent to the destruction of Jerusalem, and consequently about the time that is ascribed to them by all the external testimony which has already been insisted upon. It is that accuracy, which could only be maintained by a contemporary historian. It would be difficult, even for the author of some general speculation, not to betray his time by some occasional allusion to the ephemeral customs and institutions of the period in which he wrote. But the authors of the New Testament run a much greater risk. There are five different pieces of that collection which are purely historical, and where there is a continued reference to the characters, and politics, and passing events of the day. The destruction of Jerusalem swept away the whole fabric of Jewish polity; and it is not to be conceived, that the memory of a future generation could have retained that minute, that varied, that intimate acquaint-

ance with the statistics of a nation no longer in existence, which is evinced in every page of the evangelical writers. We find, in point of fact, that both the Heathen and Christian writers of subsequent ages do often betray their ignorance of the particular customs which obtained in Judea during the time of our Saviour. And it must be esteemed a strong circumstance in favour of the antiquity of the New Testament, that on a subject, in which the chances of detection are so numerous, and where we can scarcely advance a single step in the narrative, without the possibility of betraying our time by some mistaken allusion, it stands distinguished from every later composition, in being able to bear the most minute and intimate comparison with the contemporary historians of that period.

The argument derives great additional strength, from viewing the New Testament, not as one single performance, but as a collection of several performances. It is the work of no less than eight different authors, who wrote without any appearance of concert, who published in different parts of the world, and whose writings possess every evidence, both internal and external, of being independent productions. Had only one author exhibited the same minute accuracy of allusion, it would have been esteemed a very strong evidence of his antiquity. But when we see so many authors exhibiting such a well sustained and almost unexpected accuracy through the whole of their varied and distinct narratives, it seems difficult to avoid the conclusion, that they were either the eye-witnesses of their own history, or lived about the period of its accomplishment.

When different historians undertake the affairs of the same period, they either derive their information from one another, or proceed upon distinct and independent infor-

mation of their own. Now, it is not difficult to distinguish the copyist from the original historian. There is something in the very style and manner of an original narrative, which announces its pretensions. It is not possible that any one event, or any series of events, should make such a similar impression upon two witnesses, as to dispose them to relate it in the same language, to describe it in the same order, to form the same estimate as to the circumstances which should be noticed as important, and those other circumstances which should be suppressed as immaterial. Each witness tells the thing in his own way, makes use of his own language, and brings forward circumstances which the other might omit altogether, as not essential to the purpose of his narrative. It is this agreement in the facts, with this variety in the manner of describing them, that never fails to impress upon the inquirer that additional conviction which arises from the concurrence of separate and independent testimonies. Now, this is precisely that kind of coincidence which subsists between the New Testament writers and Josephus, in their allusions to the peculiar customs and institutions of that age. Each party maintains the style of original and independent historians. The one often omits altogether, or makes only a slight and distant allusion to what occupies a prominent part in the composition of the other. There is not the slightest vestige of any thing like a studied coincidence between them. There is variety, but no opposition; and it says much for the authenticity of both histories, that the most scrupulous and attentive criticism can scarcely detect a single example of an apparent contradiction in the testimony of these different authors, which does not admit of a likely, or at least a plausible reconciliation.

When the difference between two historians is carried to the length of a contradiction, it enfeebles the credit of

both their testimonies. When the agreement is carried to the length of a close and scrupulous resemblance in every particular, it destroys the credit of one of the parties as an independent historian. In the case before us, we neither perceive this difference, nor this agreement. Such are the variations, that, at first sight, the reader is alarmed with the appearance of very serious and embarrassing difficulties. And such is the actual coincidence, that the difficulties vanish when we apply to them the labours of a profound and intelligent criticism. Had it been the object of the Gospel writers to trick out a plausible imposition on the credulity of the world, they would have studied a closer resemblance to the existing authorities of that period; nor would they have laid themselves open to the superficial brilliancy of Voltaire, which dazzles every imagination, and reposed their vindication with the Lelands and Lardners of a distant posterity, whose sober erudition is so little attended to, and which so few know how to appreciate.

In the Gospels, we are told that Herod the Tetrarch of Galilee, married his brother Philip's wife. In Josephus we have the same story; only he gives a different name to Philip, and calls him Herod; and what adds to the difficulty, there was a Philip of that family, whom we know not to have been the first husband of Herodias. This is at first sight a little alarming. But, in the progress of our inquiries, we are given to understand from this same Josephus, that there were three Herods in the same family, and therefore no improbability in there being two Philips. We also know, from the histories of that period, that it was quite common for the same individual to have two names; and this is never more necessary, than when employed to distinguish brothers who have one name the same. The Herod who is called Philip, is just as likely a distinction, as the Simon who is

called Peter, or the Saul who is called Paul. The name of the high priest, at the time of our Saviour's crucifixion, was Caiaphas, according to the evangelists. According to Josephus, the name of the high priest at that period was Joseph. This would have been precisely a difficulty of the same kind, had not Josephus happened to mention, that this Joseph was also called Caiaphas. Would it have been dealing fairly with the evangelists, we ask, to have made their credibility depend upon the accidental omission of another historian? Is it consistent with any acknowledged principle of sound criticism, to bring four writers so entirely under the tribunal of Josephus, each of whom stands as firmly supported by all the evidences which can give authority to an historian; and who have greatly the advantage of him in this, that they can add the argument of their concurrence to the argument of each separate and independent testimony? It so happens, however, in the present instance, that even Jewish writers, in their narrative of the same circumstance, give the name of Philip to the first husband of Herodias. We by no means conceive, that any foreign testimony was necessary for the vindication of the evangelists. Still, however, it must go far to dissipate every suspicion of artifice in the construction of their histories. It proves, that in the confidence with which they delivered themselves up to their own information, they neglected appearance, and felt themselves independent of it. This apparent difficulty, like many others of the same kind, lands us in a stronger confirmation of the honesty of the evangelists; and it is delightful to perceive, how truth receives a fuller accession to its splendour, from the attempts which are made to disgrace and to darken it.

On this branch of the argument, the impartial inquirer must be struck with the little indulgence which infidels, and even Christians, have given to the evangelical writ-

ers. In other cases, when we compare the narratives of contemporary historians, it is not expected, that all the circumstances alluded to by one will be taken notice of by the rest; and it often happens, that an event or a custom is admitted upon the faith of a single historian; and the silence of all other writers is not suffered to attach suspicion or discredit to his testimony. It is an allowed principle, that a scrupulous resemblance between two histories is very far from necessary to their being held consistent with one another. And, what is more, it sometimes happens, that with contemporary historians there may be an apparent contradiction, and the credit of both parties remain as entire and unsuspicious as before. Posterity is in these cases disposed to make the most liberal allowances. Instead of calling it a contradiction, they often call it a difficulty. They are sensible, that in many instances, a seeming variety of statement has, upon a more extensive knowledge of ancient history, admitted of a perfect reconciliation. Instead, then, of referring the difficulty in question to the inaccuracy or bad faith of any of the parties, they with more justness and more modesty, refer it to their own ignorance, and to that obscurity which necessarily hangs over the history of every remote age. These principles are suffered to have great influence in every secular investigation; but so soon as, instead of a secular, it becomes a sacred investigation, every ordinary principle is abandoned, and the suspicion annexed to the teachers of religion is carried to the dereliction of all that candour and liberality with which every other document of antiquity is judged of and appreciated. How does it happen, that the authority of Josephus should be acquiesced in as a first principle, while every step, in the narrative of the evangelists, must have foreign testimony to confirm and support it? How comes it that the silence of Josephus should be construed into an impeachment of the

testimony of the evangelists, while it is never admitted for a single moment, that the silence of the evangelists can impart the slightest blemish to the testimony of Josephus? How comes it that the supposition of two Philips in one family should throw a damp of scepticism over the Gospel narrative, while the only circumstance which renders that supposition necessary is the single testimony of Josephus; in which very testimony it is necessarily implied, that there are two Herods in that same family? How comes it, that the evangelists, with as much internal, and a vast deal more of external evidence in their favour, should be made to stand before Josephus, like so many prisoners at the bar of justice? In any other case, we are convinced that this would be looked upon as *rough handling*. But we are not sorry for it. It has given more triumph and confidence to the argument. And it is no small addition to our faith, that its first teachers have survived an examination, which, in point of rigour and severity, we believe to be quite unexampled in the annals of criticism.

It is always looked upon as a favourable presumption, when a story is told circumstantially. The art and the safety of an impostor, is to confine his narrative to generals, and not to commit himself by too minute a specification of time and place, and allusion to the manners or occurrences of the day. The more of circumstance that we introduce into a story, we multiply the chances of detection, if false; and therefore, where a great deal of circumstance is introduced, it proves, that the narrator feels the confidence of truth, and labours under no apprehension for the fate of his narrative. Even though we have it not in our power to verify the truth of a single circumstance, yet the mere property of a story being circumstantial is always felt to carry an evidence in its favour. It imparts a more familiar air of life and reality to the narrative. It is easy to believe, that the groundwork of

a story may be a fabrication; but it requires a more refined species of imposture than we can well conceive, to construct a harmonious and well-sustained narrative, abounding in minute and circumstantial details which support one another, and where, with all our experience of real life, we can detect nothing misplaced, or inconsistent, or improbable.

To prosecute this argument in all its extent, it would be necessary to present the reader with a complete analysis or examination of the Gospel history. But the most superficial observer cannot fail to perceive, that it maintains, in a very high degree, the character of being a circumstantial narrative. When a miracle is recorded, we have generally the name of the town or neighbourhood where it happened; the names of the people concerned; the effect upon the hearts and convictions of the bye-standers; the arguments and examinations it gave birth to; and all that minuteness of reference and description which impresses a strong character of reality upon the whole history. If we take along with us the time at which this history made its appearance, the argument becomes much stronger. It does not merely carry a presumption in its favour, from being a circumstantial history: It carries a proof in its favour, because these circumstances were completely within the reach and examination of those to whom it was addressed. Had the evangelists been false historians, they would not have committed themselves upon so many particulars. They would not have furnished the vigilant inquirers of that period with such an effectual instrument for bringing them into discredit with the people; nor foolishly supplied, in every page of their narrative, so many materials for a cross-examination, which would infallibly have disgraced them.

Now, we of this age can institute the same cross-examination. We can compare the evangelical writers

with contemporary authors, and verify a number of circumstances in the history, and government, and peculiar economy of the Jewish people. We therefore have it in our power to institute a cross-examination upon the writers of the New Testament; and the freedom and frequency of their allusions to these circumstances supply us with ample materials for it. The fact, that they are borne out in their minute and incidental allusions by the testimony of other historians, gives a strong weight of what has been called circumstantial evidence in their favour. As a specimen of the argument, let us confine our observations to the history of our Saviour's trial, and execution, and burial. They brought him to Pontius Pilate. We know both from Tacitus and Josephus, that he was at that time governor of Judea. A sentence from him was necesary before they could proceed to the execution of Jesus; and we know that the power of life and death was usually vested in the Roman governor. Our Saviour was treated with derision; and this we know to have been a customary practice at that time, previous to the execution of criminals, and during the time of it. Pilate scourged Jesus before he gave him up to be crucified. We know from ancient authors, that this was a very usual practice among the Romans. The account of an execution generally run in this form: He was stripped, whipped, and beheaded or executed. According to the evangelists, his accusation was written on the top of the cross; and we learn from Suetonius and others, that the crime of the person to be executed was affixed to the instrument of his punishment. According to the evangelist, this accusation was written in three different languages; and we know from Josephus, that it was quite common in Jerusalem to have all public advertisements written in this manner. According to the evangelists, Jesus had to bear his cross; and we know from other resources of information, that this was the con-

stant practice of these times. According to the evangelists, the body of Jesus was given up to be buried at the request of friends. We know that, unless the criminal was infamous, this was the law, or the custom with all Roman governors.

These, and a few more particulars of the same kind, occur within the compass of a single page of the evangelical history. The circumstantial manner of the history affords a presumption in its favour, antecedent to all examination into the truth of the circumstances themselves. But it makes a strong addition to the evidence, when we find, that in all the subordinate parts of the main story, the evangelists maintain so great a consistency with the testimony of other authors, and with all we can collect from other sources of information, as to the manners and institutions of that period. It is difficult to conceive, in the first instance, how the inventor of a fabricated story would hazard such a number of circumstances, each of them supplying a point of comparison with other authors, and giving to the inquirer an additional chance of detecting the imposition. And it is still more difficult to believe, that truth should have been so artfully blended with falsehood in the composition of this narrative, particularly as we perceive nothing like a forced introduction of any one circumstance. There appears to be nothing out of place, nothing thrust in with the view of imparting an air of probability to the history. The circumstance upon which we bring the evangelists into comparison with profane authors, is often not intimated in a direct form, but in the form of a slight or distant allusion. There is not the most remote appearance of its being fetched or sought for. It is brought in accidentally, and flows in the most natural and undesigned manner out of the progress of the narrative.

The circumstance, that none of the Gospel writers are

inconsistent with one another, falls better under a different branch of the argument. It is enough for our present purpose, that there is no single writer inconsistent with himself. It often happens, that falsehood carries its own refutation along with it; and that, through the artful disguises which are employed in the construction of a fabricated story, we can often detect a flaw or a contradiction, which condemns the authority of the whole narrative. Now, every single piece of the New Testament wants this mark or character of falsehood. The different parts are found to sustain, and harmonise, and flow out of each other. Each has at least the merit of being a consistent narrative. For any thing we see upon the face of it, it may be true, and a further hearing must be given before we can be justified in rejecting it as the tale of an impostor.

There is another mark of falsehood which each of the Gospel narratives appears to be exempted from. There is little or no parading about their own integrity. We can collect their pretensions to credit from the history itself, but we see no anxious display of these pretensions. We cannot fail to perceive the force of that argument which is derived from the publicity of the Christian miracles, and the very minute and scrupulous examination which they had to sustain from the rulers and official men of Judea. But this publicity, and these examinations, are simply recorded by the evangelists. There is no boastful reference to these circumstances, and no ostentatious display of the advantage which they give to the Christian argument. They bring their story forward in the shape of a direct and unencumbered narrative, and deliver themselves with that simplicity and unembarrassed confidence, which nothing but their consciousness of truth, and the perfect feeling of their own strength and consistency, can account for. They do not write, as if their

object was to carry a point that was at all doubtful or suspicious. It is simply to transmit to the men of other times, and of other countries, a memorial of the events which led to the establishment of the Christian religion in the world. In the prosecution of their narrative, we challenge the most refined judge of the human character, to point out a single symptom of diffidence in the truth of their own story, or of art to cloak this diffidence from the notice of the most severe and vigilant observers. The manner of the New Testament writers does not carry in it the slightest idea of its being an assumed manner. It is quite natural, quite unguarded, and free of all apprehension, that their story is to meet with any discredit or contradiction from any of those numerous readers, who had it fully in their power to verify or to expose it. We see no expedient made use of to obtain or to conciliate the acquiescence of their readers. They appear to feel as if they did not need it. They deliver what they have to say, in a round and unvarnished manner; nor is it in general accompanied with any of those strong asseverations by which an impostor so often attempts to practise upon the credulity of his victims.

In the simple narrative of the evangelists, they betray no feeling of wonder at the extraordinary nature of the events which they record, and no consciousness that what they are announcing is to excite any wonder among their readers. This appears to us to be a very strong circumstance. Had it been the newly broached tale of an impostor, he would, in all likelihood, have feigned astonishment himself, or at least have laid his account with the doubt and astonishment of those to whom it was addressed. When a person tells a wonderful story to a company who are totally unacquainted with it, he must be sensible, not merely of the surprise which is excited in the minds of the hearers, but of a corresponding sympathy in his own

mind with the feelings of those who listen to him. He lays his account with the wonder, if not the incredulity, of his hearers; and this distinctly appears in the terms with which he delivers his story, and the manner in which he introduces it. It makes a wide difference, if, on the other hand, he tells the same story to a company, who have long been apprised of the chief circumstances, but who listen to him for the mere purpose of obtaining a more distinct and particular narrative. Now, in as far as we can collect from the manner of the evangelists, they stand in this last predicament. They do not write, as if they were imposing a novelty upon their readers. In the language of Luke, they write for the sake of giving more distinct information; and that the readers *might know the certainty of those things, wherein they had been instructed.* In the prosecution of this task, they deliver themselves with the most familiar and unembarrassed simplicity. They do not appear to anticipate the surprise of their readers, or to be at all aware, that the marvellous nature of their story is to be any obstacle to its credit or reception in the neighbourhood. At the first performance of our Saviour's miracles, there was a strong and a widely spread sensation over the whole country. *His fame went abroad,* and *all people were amazed.* This is quite natural; and the circumstance of no surprise being either felt or anticipated by the evangelists, in the writing of their history, can best be accounted for by the truth of the history itself, that the experience of years had blunted the edge of novelty, and rendered miracles familiar, not only to them, but to all the people to whom they addressed themselves.

What appears to us a most striking internal evidence for the truth of the Gospel, is that perfect unity of mind and of purpose which is ascribed to our Saviour. Had he been an impostor, he could not have foreseen all the

fluctuations of his history, and yet no expression of surprise is recorded to have escaped from him. No event appears to have caught him unprepared. We see no shifting of doctrine or sentiment, with a view to accommodate to new or unexpected circumstances. His parables and warnings to his disciples give sufficient intimation, that he laid his account with all those events which appeared to his unenlightened friends to be so untoward and so unpromising. In every explanation of his objects, we see the perfect consistency of a mind, before whose prophetic eye all futurity lay open; and when the events of this futurity came round, he met them, not as chances that were unforeseen, but as certainties which he had provided for. This consistency of his views is supported through all the variations of his history, and it stands finally contrasted in the record of the evangelists, with the misconceptions, the surprises, the disappointments of his followers. The gradual progress of their minds from the splendid anticipations of earthly grandeur, to a full acquiescence in the doctrine of a crucified Saviour, throws a stronger light on the perfect unity of purpose and of conception which animated his, and which can only be accounted for by the inspiration that filled and enlightened it. It may have been possible enough to describe a well-sustained example of this contrast from an actual history before us. It is difficult, however, to conceive, how it could be sustained so well, and in a manner so apparently artless, by means of invention, and particularly when the inventors made their own errors and their own ignorance form part of the fabrication.

CHAP. IV.

ON THE TESTIMONY OF THE ORIGINAL WITNESSES TO THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL NARRATIVE.

III. THERE was nothing in the situation of the New Testament writers, which leads us to perceive that they had any possible inducement for publishing a falsehood.

We have not to allege the mere testimony of the Christian writers, for the danger to which the profession of Christianity exposed all its adherents at that period. We have the testimony of Tacitus to this effect. We have innumerable allusions, or express intimations, of the same circumstance in the Roman historians. The treatment and persecution of the Christians makes a principal figure in the affairs of the empire; and there is no point better established in ancient history, than that the bare circumstance of being a Christian, brought many to the punishment of death, and exposed all to the danger of a suffering the most appalling and repulsive to the feelings of our nature.

It is not difficult to perceive, why the Roman government, in its treatment of Christians, departed from its usual principles of toleration. We know it to have been their uniform practice, to allow every indulgence to the religious belief of those different countries in which they established themselves. The truth is, that such an indulgence demanded of them no exertion of moderation or principle. It was quite consonant to the spirit of Pagan-

ism. A different country worshipped different gods, but it was a general principle of Paganism, that each country had its gods, to which the inhabitants of that country owed their peculiar homage and veneration. In this way there was no interference between the different religions which prevailed in the world. It fell in with the policy of the Roman government to allow the fullest toleration to other religions, and it demanded no sacrifice of principle. It was even a dictate of principle with them to respect the gods of other countries; and the violation of a religion different from their own, seems to have been felt, not merely as a departure from policy or justice, but to be viewed with the same sentiment of horror which is annexed to blasphemy or sacrilege. So long as we were under Paganism, the truth of one religion did not involve in it the falsehood or rejection of another. In respecting the religion of another country, we did not abandon our own; nor did it follow, that the inhabitants of that other country annexed any contempt or discredit to the religion in which we had been educated. In this mutual reverence for the religion of each other, no principle was departed from, and no object of veneration abandoned. It did not involve in it the denial or relinquishment of our own gods, but only the addition of so many more gods to our catalogue.

In this respect, however, the Jews stood distinguished from every other people within the limits of the Roman empire. Their religious belief carried in it something more than attachment to their own system. It carried in it the contempt and detestation of every other. Yet, in spite of this circumstance, their religion was protected by the mild and equitable toleration of the Roman government. The truth is, that there was nothing in the habits or character of the Jews, which was calculated to give much disturbance to the establishments of other countries.

Though they admitted converts from other nations, yet their spirit of proselytism was far from being of that active or adventurous kind, which could alarm the Roman government for the safety of any existing institutions. Their high and exclusive veneration for their own system gave an unsocial disdain to the Jewish character, which was not at all inviting to foreigners; but still, as it led to nothing mischievous in point of effect, it seems to have been overlooked by the Roman government as a piece of impotent vanity.

But the case was widely different with the Christian system. It did not confine itself to the denial or rejection of every other system. It was for imposing its own exclusive authority over the consciences of all, and for detaching as many as it could from their allegiance to the religion of their own country. It carried on its forehead all the offensive characters of a monopoly, and not merely excited resentment by the supposed arrogance of its pretensions, but from the rapidity and extent of its innovations, spread an alarm over the whole Roman empire for the security of all its establishments. Accordingly, at the commencement of its progress, so long as it was confined to Judea and the immediate neighbourhood, it seems to have been in perfect safety from the persecutions of the Roman government. It was at first looked upon as a mere modification of Judaism, and that the first Christians differed from the rest of their countrymen only *in certain questions of their own superstition.* For a few years after the crucifixion of our Saviour, it seems to have excited no alarm on the part of the Roman emperors, who did not depart from their usual maxims of toleration, till they began to understand the magnitude of its pretensions, and the unlooked for success which attended them.

In the course of a very few years after its first promulgation, it drew down upon it the hostility of the Roman

government; and the fact is undoubted, that some of its first teachers, who announced themselves to be the companions of our Saviour, and the eye-witnesses of all the remarkable events in his history, suffered martyrdom for their adherence to the religion which they taught.

The disposition of the Jews to the religion of Jesus was no less hostile; and it manifested itself at a still earlier stage of the business. The causes of this hostility are obvious to all who are in the slightest degree conversant with the history of those times. It is true, that the Jews did not at all times possess the power of life and death; nor was it competent for them to bring the Christians to execution by the exercise of legal authority. Still, however, their powers of mischief were considerable. Their wishes had always a certain controul over the measures of the Roman governor; and we know, that it was this controul which was the means of extorting from Pilate the unrighteous sentence by which the very first teacher of our religion was brought to a cruel and ignominious death. We also know, that under Herod Agrippa the power of life and death was vested in a Jewish sovereign, and that this power was actually exerted against the most distinguished Christians of that time. Add to this, that the Jews had, at all times, the power of inflicting the lesser punishments. They could whip, they could imprison. Besides all this, the Christians had to brave the frenzy of an enraged multitude; and some of them actually suffered martyrdom in the violence of the popular commotions.

Nothing is more evident than the utter disgrace which was annexed by the world at large to the profession of Christianity at that period. Tacitus calls it "*superstitio exitiabilis*," and accuses the Christians of enmity to mankind. By Epictetus and others, their heroism is termed obstinacy, and it was generally treated by the Roman

governors as the infatuation of a miserable and despised people. There was none of that glory annexed to it which blazes around the martyrdom of a patriot or a philosopher. That constancy, which, in another cause, would have made them illustrious, was held to be a contemptible folly, which only exposed them to the derision and insolence of the multitude. A name and a reputation in the world might sustain the dying moments of Socrates or Regulus; but what earthly principles can account for the intrepidity of those poor and miserable outcasts, who consigned themselves to a voluntary martyrdom in the cause of their religion?

Having premised these observations, we offer the following alternative to the mind of every candid inquirer. The first Christians either delivered a sincere testimony, or they imposed a story upon the world which they knew to be a fabrication.

The persecutions to which the first Christians voluntarily exposed themselves, compel us to adopt the first part of the alternative. It is not to be conceived, that a man would resign fortune, and character, and life, in the assertion of what he knew to be a falsehood. The first Christians must have believed their story to be true; and it only remains to prove, that if they believed it to be true, it must be true indeed.

A voluntary martyrdom must be looked upon as the highest possible evidence which it is in the power of man to give of his sincerity. The martyrdom of Socrates has never been questioned, as an undeniable proof of the sincere devotion of his mind to the principles of that philosophy for which he suffered. The death of Archbishop Cranmer will be allowed by all to be a decisive evidence of his sincere rejection of what he conceived to be the errors of Popery, and his thorough conviction in the truth of the opposite system. When the council of Geneva

burnt Servetus, no one will question the sincerity of the latter's belief, however much he may question the truth of it. Now, in all these cases, the proof goes no farther than to establish the sincerity of the martyr's belief. It goes but a little way, indeed, in establishing the justness of it. This is a different question. A man may be mistaken, though he be sincere. His errors, if they are not seen to be such, will exercise all the influence and authority of truth over him. Martyrs have bled on the opposite sides of the question. It is impossible, then, to rest on this circumstance as an argument for the truth of either system; but the argument is always deemed incontrovertible, in as far as it goes to establish the sincerity of each of the parties, and that both died in the firm conviction of the doctrines which they professed.

Now, the martyrdom of the first Christians stands distinguished from all other examples by this circumstance, that it not merely proves the sincerity of the martyr's belief, but it also proves that what he believed was true. In other cases of martyrdom, the sufferer, when he lays down his life, gives his testimony to the truth of an opinion. In the case of the Christians, when they laid down their lives, they gave their testimony to the truth of a fact of which they affirmed themselves to be the eye and the ear witnesses. The sincerity of both testimonies is unquestionable; but it is only in the latter case that the truth of the testimony follows as a necessary consequence of its sincerity. An opinion comes under the cognizance of the understanding, ever liable, as we all know, to error and delusion. A fact comes under the cognizance of the senses, which have ever been esteemed as infallible, when they give their testimony to such plain, and obvious, and palpable appearances, as those which make up the evangelical story. We are still at liberty to question the philosophy of Socrates, or the orthodoxy of Cranmer and Serve-

tus; but if we were told by a Christian teacher, in the solemnity of his dying hour, and with the dreadful apparatus of martyrdom before him, that he saw Jesus after he had risen from the dead; that he conversed with him many days; that he put his hand into the print of his sides; and, in the ardour of his joyful conviction, exclaimed, "My Lord, and my God!" we should feel that there was no truth in the world, did this language and this testimony deceive us.

If Christianity be not true, then the first Christians must have been mistaken as to the subject of their testimony. This supposition is destroyed by the nature of the subject. It was not testimony to a doctrine which might deceive the understanding. It was something more than testimony to a dream, or a trance, or a midnight fancy, which might deceive the imagination. It was testimony to a multitude, and a succession of palpable facts, which could never have deceived the senses, and which preclude all possibility of mistake, even though it had been the testimony only of one individual. But when, in addition to this, we consider, that it is the testimony, not of one, but of many individuals; that it is a story repeated in a variety of forms, but substantially the same; that it is the concurring testimony of different eye-witnesses, or the companions of eye-witnesses—we may, after this, take refuge in the idea of falsehood and collusion; but it is not to be admitted, that these eight different writers of the New Testament, could have all blundered the matter with such method, and such uniformity.

We know that, in spite of the magnitude of their sufferings, there are infidels, who, driven from the first part of the alternative, have recurred to the second, and have affirmed, that the glory of establishing a new religion, induced the first Christians to assert, and to persist in asserting, what they knew to be a falsehood. But (though

we should be anticipating the last branch of the argument) they forget, that we have the concurrence of two parties to the truth of Christianity, and that it is the conduct only of one of the parties, which can be accounted for by the supposition in question. The two parties are the teachers and the taught. The former may aspire to the glory of founding a new faith; but what glory did the latter propose to themselves from being the dupes of an imposition so ruinous to every earthly interest, and held in such low and disgraceful estimation by the world at large? Abandon the teachers of Christianity to every imputation, which infidelity, on the rack for conjectures, to give plausibility to its system, can desire; how shall we explain the concurrence of its disciples? There may be a glory in leading, but we see no glory in being led. If Christianity were false, and Paul had the effrontery to appeal to his five hundred living witnesses whom he alleges to have seen Christ after his resurrection; the submissive acquiescence of his disciples remains a very inexplicable circumstance. The same Paul, in his epistles to the Corinthians, tells them that some of them had the gift of healing, and the power of working miracles; and that the signs of an apostle had been wrought among them in wonders and mighty deeds. A man aspiring to the glory of an accredited teacher, would never have committed himself on a subject, where his falsehood could have been so readily exposed. And in the veneration with which we know his epistles to have been preserved by the church of Corinth, we have not merely the testimony of their writer to the truth of the Christian miracles, but the testimony of a whole people, who had no interest in being deceived.

Had Christianity been false, the reputation of its first teachers lay at the mercy of every individual among the numerous proselytes which they had gained to their sys-

tem. It may not be competent for an unlettered peasant to detect the absurdity of a doctrine; but he can at all times lift his testimony against a fact, said to have happened in his presence, and under the observation of his senses. Now it so happens, that in a number of the epistles, there are allusions to, or express intimations of, the miracles that had been wrought in the different churches to which these epistles are addressed. How comes it, if it be all a fabrication, that it was never exposed? We know, that some of the disciples were driven, by the terrors of persecuting violence, to resign their profession. How should it happen, that none of them ever attempted to vindicate their apostacy, by laying open the artifice and insincerity of their Christian teachers? We may be sure that such a testimony would have been highly acceptable to the existing authorities of that period. The Jews would have made the most of it; and the vigilant and discerning officers of the Roman government would not have failed to turn it to account. The mystery would have been exposed and laid open, and the curiosity of latter ages would have been satisfied as to the wonderful and unaccountable steps, by which a religion could make such head in the world, though it rested its whole authority on facts; the falsehood of which was accessible to all who were at the trouble to inquire about them. But no! We hear of no such testimony from the apostates of that period. We read of some, who, agonised at the reflection of their treachery, returned to their first profession, and expiated, by martyrdom, the guilt which they felt they had incurred by their dereliction of the truth. This furnishes a strong example of the power of conviction, and when we join with it, that it is conviction in the integrity of those teachers who appealed to miracles which had been wrought among them, it appears to us a testimony in favour of our religion which is altogether irresistible.

CHAP. V.

ON THE TESTIMONY OF SUBSEQUENT WITNESSES.

IV. But this brings us to the last division of the argument, viz. that the leading facts in the history of the Gospel are corroborated by the testimony of others.

The evidence we have already brought forward for the antiquity of the New Testament, and the veneration in which it was held from the earliest ages of the church, is an implied testimony of all the Christians of that period to the truth of the Gospel history. By proving the authenticity of St. Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians, we not merely establish his testimony to the truth of the Christian miracles,—we establish the additional testimony of the whole church of Corinth, who would never have respected these Epistles, if Paul had ventured upon a falsehood so open to detection, as the assertion, that miracles were wrought among them, which not a single individual ever witnessed. By proving the authenticity of the New Testament at large, we secure, not merely that argument, which is founded on the testimony and concurrence of its different writers, but also the testimony of those immense multitudes, who, in distant countries, submitted to the New Testament as the rule of their faith. The testimony of the teachers, whether we take into consideration the subject of that testimony, or the circumstances under which it was delivered, is of itself a stronger argument for the truth of the Gospel history, than can be alleged for the truth of any other history, which has been transmitted

down to us from ancient times. The concurrence of the taught carries along with it a host of additional testimonies, which gives an evidence to the evangelical story, that is altogether unexampled. On a point of ordinary history, the testimony of Tacitus is held decisive, because it is not contradicted. The history of the New Testament is not only not contradicted, but confirmed by the strongest possible expressions which men can give of their acquiescence in its truth; by thousands who were either agents or eye-witnesses of the transactions recorded, who could not be deceived, who had no interest, and no glory to gain by supporting a falsehood, and who, by their sufferings in the cause of what they professed to be their belief, gave the highest evidence that human nature can give of sincerity.

In this circumstance, it may be perceived, how much the evidence for Christianity goes beyond all ordinary historical evidence. A profane historian relates a series of events which happen in a particular age; and we count it well, if it be his own age, and if the history which he gives us be the testimony of a contemporary author. Another historian succeeds him at the distance of years, and, by repeating the same story, gives the additional evidence of his testimony to its truth. A third historian perhaps goes over the same ground, and lends another confirmation to the history. And it is thus, by collecting all the lights which are thinly scattered over the tract of ages and of centuries, that we obtain all the evidence which can be got, and all the evidence that is generally wished for.

Now, there is room for a thousand presumptions, which, if admitted, would overturn the whole of this evidence. For any thing we know, the first historians may have had some interest in disguising the truth, or substituting in its place a falsehood, and a fabrication. True, it has not been contradicted, but they form a very small

number of men, who feel strongly or particularly interested in a question of history. The literary and speculative men of that age may have perhaps been engaged in other pursuits, or their testimonies may have perished in the wreck of centuries. The second historian may have been so far removed in point of time from the events of his narratives, that he can furnish us not with an independent, but with a derived testimony. He may have copied his account from the original historian, and the falsehood have come down to us in the shape of an authentic and well-attested history. Presumptions may be multiplied without end; yet in spite of them, there is a natural confidence in the veracity of man, which disposes us to as firm a belief in many of the facts of ancient history, as in the occurrences of the present day.

The history of the Gospel, however, stands distinguished from all other history, by the uninterrupted nature of its testimony, which carries down its evidence, without a chasm, from its earliest promulgation to the present day. We do not speak of the superior weight and splendour of its evidences, at the first publication of that history, as being supported, not merely by the testimony of one, but by the concurrence of several independent witnesses. We do not speak of its subsequent writers, who follow one another in a far closer and more crowded train, than there is any other example of in the history or literature of the world. We speak of the strong though unwritten testimony of its numerous proselytes, who, in the very fact of their proselytism, give the strongest possible confirmation to the Gospel, and fill up every chasm in the recorded evidence of past times.

In the written testimonies for the truth of the Christian religion, Barnabas comes next in order to the first promulgators of the evangelical story. He was a contemporary of the apostles, and writes a very few years after

the publication of the pieces which make up the New Testament. Clement follows, who was a fellow-labourer of Paul, and writes an epistle in the name of the church of Rome, to the church of Corinth. The written testimonies follow one another with a closeness and a rapidity of which there is no example; but what we insist on at present, is the unwritten and implied testimony of the people who composed these two churches. There can be no fact better established, than that these two churches were planted in the days of the apostles, and that the Epistles which were respectively addressed to them, were held in the utmost authority and veneration. There is no doubt, that the leading facts of the Gospel history were familiar to them; that it was in the power of many individuals amongst them to verify these facts, either by their own personal observation, or by an actual conversation with eye-witnesses; and that in particular, it was in the power of almost every individual in the church of Corinth, either to verify the miracles which St. Paul alludes to, in his epistle to that church, or to detect and expose the imposition, had there been no foundation for such an allusion. What do we see in all this, but the strongest possible testimony of a whole people to the truth of the Christian miracles? There is nothing like this in common history,—the formation of a society, which can only be explained by the history of the Gospel, and where the conduct of every individual furnishes a distinct pledge and evidence of its truth. And to have a full view of the argument, we must reflect, that it is not one, but many societies, scattered over the different countries of the world; that the principle upon which each society was formed, was the divine authority of Christ and his apostles, resting upon the recorded miracles of the New Testament; that these miracles were wrought with a publicity, and at a nearness of time, which rendered them accessible to the

inquiries of all, for upwards of half a century; that nothing but the power of conviction could have induced the people of that age to embrace a religion so disgraced and so persecuted; that every temptation was held out for its disciples to abandon it; and that though some of them, overpowered by the terrors of punishment, were driven to apostacy, yet not one of them has left us a testimony which can impeach the miracles of Christianity, or the integrity of its first teachers.

It may be observed, that in pursuing the line of continuity from the days of the apostles, the written testimonies for the truth of the Christian miracles follow one another in closer succession, than we have any other example of in ancient history. But what gives such peculiar and unprecedented evidence to the history of the Gospel is, that in the concurrence of the multitudes who embraced it, and in the existence of those numerous churches and societies of men who espoused the profession of the Christian faith, we cannot but perceive, that every small interval of time between the written testimonies of authors is filled up by materials so strong and so firmly cemented, as to present us with an unbroken chain of evidence, carrying as much authority along with it, as if it had been a diurnal record, commencing from the days of the apostles, and authenticated through its whole progress by the testimony of thousands.

Every convert to the Christian faith in those days, gives one additional testimony to the truth of the Gospel history. Is he a Gentile? The sincerity of his testimony is approved by the persecutions, the sufferings, the danger, and often the certainty of martyrdom, which the profession of Christianity incurred. Is he a Jew? The sincerity of his testimony is approved by all these evidences, and in addition to them by this well known fact, that the faith and doctrine of Christianity were in the highest de-

gree repugnant to the wishes and prejudices of that people. It ought never to be forgotten, that in as far as Jews are concerned, Christianity does not owe a single proselyte to its doctrines, but to the power and credit of its evidences, and that Judea was the chief theatre on which these evidences were exhibited. It cannot be too often repeated, that these evidences rest not upon arguments, but upon facts; and that the time, and the place, and the circumstance, rendered these facts accessible to the inquiries of all who chose to be at the trouble of this examination. And there can be no doubt that this trouble was taken, whether we reflect on the nature of the Christian faith, as being so offensive to the pride and bigotry of the Jewish people, or whether we reflect on the consequences of embracing it, which were derision, and hatred, and banishment, and death. We may be sure, that a step which involved in it such painful sacrifices, would not be entered into upon light and insufficient grounds. In the sacrifices they made, the Jewish converts gave every evidence of having delivered an honest testimony in favour of the Christian miracles; and when we reflect, that many of them must have heen eye-witnesses, and all of them had it in their power to verify these miracles, by conversation and correspondence with bye-standers, there can be no doubt, that it was not merely an honest, but a competent testimony. There is no fact better established, than that many thousands among the Jews believed in Jesus and his apostles; and we have therefore to allege their conversion, as a strong additional confirmation to the written testimony of the original historians.

One of the popular objections against the truth of the Christian miracles, is the general infidelity of the Jewish people. We are convinced, that at the moment of proposing this objection, an actual delusion exists in the mind of the infidel. In his conception, the Jews and the Chris-

tians stand opposed to each other. In the belief of the latter, he sees nothing but a party or an interested testimony, and in the unbelief of the former, he sees a whole people persevering in their ancient faith and resisting the new faith, on the ground of its insufficient evidences. He forgets all the while, that the testimony of a great many of these Christians, is in fact the testimony of Jews. He only attends to them in their present capacity. He contemplates them in the light of Christians, and annexes to them all that suspicion and incredulity which are generally annexed to the testimony of an interested party. He is aware of what they are at present, Christians and defenders of Christianity; but he has lost sight of their original situation, and is totally unmindful of this circumstance, that in their transition from Judaism to Christianity, they have given him the very evidence he is in quest of. Had another thousand of these Jews renounced the faith of their ancestors, and embraced the religion of Jesus, they would have been equivalent to a thousand additional testimonies in favour of Christianity, and testimonies too of the strongest and most unsuspicious kind, that can well he imagined. But this evidence would make no impression on the mind of an infidel, and the strength of it is disguised, even from the eyes of the Christian. These thousand, in the moment of their conversion, lose the appellation of Jews, and merge into the name and distinction of Christians. The Jews, though diminished in number, retain the national appellation; and the obstinacy with which they persevere in the belief of their ancestors, is still looked upon as the adverse testimony of an entire people. So long as one of that people continues a Jew, his testimony is looked upon as a serious impediment in the way of the Christian evidences. But the moment he becomes a Christian, his motives are contemplated with distrust. He is one of the obnoxious and suspected party. The mind

carries a reference only to what he is, and not to what he has been. It overlooks the change of sentiment, and forgets, that, in the renunciation of old habits, and old prejudices, in defiance to sufferings and disgrace, in attachment to a religion so repugnant to the pride and bigotry of their nation, and above all, in submission to a system of doctrines which rested its authority on the miracles of their own time, and their own remembrance, every Jewish convert gives the most decisive testimony which man can give for the truth and divinity of our religion.

But why, then, says the infidel, did they not all believe? Had the miracles of the Gospel been true, we do not see how human nature could have held out against an evidence so striking and so extraordinary; nor can we at all enter into the obstinacy of that belief which is ascribed to the majority of the Jewish people, and which led them to shut their eyes against a testimony, that no man of common sense, we think, could have resisted.

Many Christian writers have attempted to resolve this difficulty, and to prove that the infidelity of the Jews, in spite of the miracles which they saw, is perfectly consistent with the known principles of human nature. For this purpose, they have enlarged, with much force and plausibility, on the strength and inveteracy of the Jewish prejudices—on the bewildering influence of religious bigotry upon the understanding of men—on the woeful disappointment which Christianity offered to the pride and interest of the nation—on the selfishness of the priesthood—and on the facility with which they might turn a blind and fanatical multitude, who had been trained, by their earliest habits, to follow and to revere them.

In the Gospel history itself, we have a very consistent account at least of the Jewish opposition to the claims of our Saviour. We see the deeply wounded pride of a nation, that felt itself disgraced by the loss of its independ-

ence. We see the arrogance of its peculiar and exclusive claims to the favour of the Almighty. We see the anticipation of a great prince, who was to deliver them from the power and subjection of their enemies. We see their insolent contempt for the people of other countries, and the foulest scorn that they should be admitted to an equality with themselves in the honours and benefits of a revelation from heaven. We may easily conceive, how much the doctrine of Christ and his apostles was calculated to gall, and irritate, and disappoint them; how it must have mortified their national vanity; how it must have alarmed the jealousy of an artful and interested priesthood; and how it must have scandalized the great body of the people, by the liberality with which it addressed itself to all men, and to all nations, and raised to an elevation with themselves, those whom the firmest habits and prejudices of their country had led them to contemplate under all the disgrace and ignominy of outcasts.

Accordingly we know, in fact, that bitterness, and resentment, and wounded pride, lay at the bottom of a great deal of the opposition, which Christianity experienced from the Jewish people. In the New Testament history itself, we see repeated examples of their outrageous violence; and this is confirmed by the testimony of many other writers. In the history of the martyrdom of Polycarp, it is stated, that the Gentiles and Jews inhabiting Smyrna, in a furious rage, and with a loud voice, cried out, "This is the teacher of Asia, the father of the Christians, the destroyer of our gods, who teacheth all men not to sacrifice, nor to worship them!" They collected wood, and the dried branches of trees, for his pile; and it is added, "the Jews also, according to custom, assisting with the greatest forwardness." It is needless to multiply testimonies to a point so generally understood; as, that it was not conviction alone, which lay at the bottom of their

opposition to the Christians; that a great deal of passion entered into it; and that their numerous acts of hostility against the worshippers of Jesus, carry in them all the marks of fury and resentment.

Now we know that the power of passion will often carry it very far over the power of conviction. We know that the strength of conviction is not in proportion to the quantity of evidence *presented*, but to the quantity of evidence *attended to*, and perceived, in consequence of that attention. We also know, that attention is, in a great measure, a voluntary act, and that it is often in the power of the mind, both to turn away its attention from what would land it in any painful or humiliating conclusion, and to deliver itself up exclusively to those arguments, which flatter its taste and its prejudices. All this lies within the range of familiar and every-day experience. We all know how much it ensures the success of an argument, when it gets a *favourable* hearing. In by far the greater number of instances, the parties in a litigation are not merely each *attached* to their own side of the question; but each *confident and believing* that theirs is the side on which the justice lies. In those contests of opinion, which take place every day between man and man, and particularly if passion and interest have any share in the controversy, it is evident to the slightest observation, that though it might have been selfishness, in the first instance, which gave a peculiar direction to the understanding, yet each of the parties often comes, at last, to entertain a sincere conviction in the truth of his own argument. It is not that truth is not one and immutable. The whole difference lies in the observers; each of them viewing the object through the medium of his own prejudices, or cherishing those peculiar habits of attention and understanding, to which taste or inclination had disposed him.

In addition to all this, we know, that though the evidence for a particular truth be so glaring, that it forces itself upon the understanding, and all the sophistry of passion and interest cannot withstand it; yet if this truth be of a very painful and humiliating kind, the obstinacy of man will often dispose him to resist its influence, and, in the bitterness of his malignant feelings, to carry a hostility against it, and that too in proportion to the weight of the argument which may be brought forward in its favour.

Now, if we take into account the inveteracy of the Jewish prejudices, and reflect how unpalatable and how mortifying to their pride must have been the doctrine of a crucified Saviour; we believe that their conduct, in reference to Christianity and its miraculous evidences, presents us with nothing anomalous or inexplicable, and that it will appear a possible and a likely thing to every understanding, that has been much cultivated in the experience of human affairs, in the nature of mind, and in the science of its character and phenomena.

There is a difficulty, however, in the way of this investigation. From the nature of the case, it bears no resemblance to any thing else, that has either been recorded in history, or has come within the range of our own personal observation. There is no other example of a people called upon to renounce the darling faith and principles of their country, and that upon the authority of miracles exhibited before them. All the experience we have about the operation of prejudice, and the perverseness of the human temper and understanding, cannot afford a complete solution of the question. In many respects, it is a case *sui generis*, and the only creditable information which we can obtain, to enlighten us in this inquiry, is through the medium of that very testimony upon which the difficulty in question has thrown the suspicion that we want to get rid of.

Let us give all the weight to this argument of which it is susceptible, and the following is the precise degree in which it effects the merits of the controversy. When the religion of Jesus was promulgated in Judea, its first teachers appealed to miracles wrought by themselves in the face of day, as the evidence of their being commissioned by God. Many adopted the new religion upon this appeal, and many rejected it. An argument in favour of Christianity is derived from the conduct of the first. An objection against Christianity is derived from the conduct of the second. Now, allowing that we are not in possession of experience enough for estimating, in *absolute terms*, the strength of the objection, we propose the following as a solid and unexceptionable principle, upon which to estimate a comparison between the strength of the objection and the strength of the argument. We are sure that the first would not have embraced Christianity had its miracles been false; but we are not sure beforehand, whether the second would have rejected this religion on the supposition of the miracles being true. If experience does not enlighten us as to how far the exhibition of a real miracle would be effectual in inducing men to renounce their old and favourite opinions, we can infer nothing decisive from the conduct of those who still kept by the Jewish religion. This conduct was a matter of uncertainty, and any argument which may be extracted from it cannot be depended upon. But the case is widely different with that party of their nation who were converted from Judaism to Christianity. We know that the alleged miracles of Christianity were perfectly open to examination. We are sure, from our experience of human nature, that in a question so interesting, this examination would be given. We know, from the very nature of the miraculous facts, so remote from every thing like what would be attempted by jugglery, or pretended to by

enthusiasm, that, if this examination were given, it would fix the truth or falsehood of the miracles. The truth of these miracles, then, for any thing we know, may be consistent with the conduct of the Jewish party; but the falsehood of these miracles, from all that we do know of human nature, is not consistent with the conduct of the Christian party. Granting that we are *not sure* whether a miracle would force the Jewish nation to renounce their opinions, all that we can say of the conduct of the Jewish party is that we are not able to explain it. But there is one thing that we *are sure* of. We are sure, that if the pretensions, of Christianity be false, it never could have forced any part of the Jewish nation to renounce their opinions, with its alleged miracles, so open to detection, and its doctrines so offensive to every individual. The conduct of the Christian party then is not only what we are able to explain, but we can say with certainty, that it admits of no other explanation than the truth of that hypothesis which we contend for. We may not know in how far an attachment to existing opinions will prevail over an argument which is felt to be true; but we are sure, that this attachment will never give way to an argument which is perceived to be false; and particularly when danger, and hatred, and persecution, are the consequences of embracing it. The argument for Christianity, from the conduct of the first proselytes, rests upon the firm ground of experience. The objection against it, from the conduct of the unbelieving Jews, has no experience whatever to rest upon.

The conduct of the Jews may be considered as a solitary fact in the history of the world, not from its being an exception to the general principles of human nature, but from its being an exhibition of human nature in singular circumstances. We have no experience to guide us in our opinion as to the probability of this conduct; and

nothing, therefore, that can impeach a testimony which all experience in human affairs leads us to repose in as unquestionable. But after this testimony is admitted, we may submit to be enlightened by it; and in the history which it gives us of the unbelieving Jews, it furnishes a curious fact as to the power of prejudice upon the human mind, and a valuable accession to what we before knew of the principles of our nature. It lays before us an exhibition of the human mind in a situation altogether unexampled, and furnishes us with the result of a singular experiment, if we may so call it, in the history of the species. We offer it as an interesting fact to the moral and intellectual philosopher, that a previous attachment may sway the mind even against the impression of a miracle; and those who believe not in the historical evidence which established the authority of Christ and of the apostles, would not believe, even though one rose from the dead.

We are inclined to think, that the argument has come down to us in the best possible form, and that it would have been enfeebled by that very circumstance, which the infidel demands as essential to its validity. Suppose for a moment that we could give him what he wants, that all the priests and people of Judea were so borne down by the resistless evidence of miracles, as by one universal consent to become the disciples of the new religion. What interpretation might have been given to this unanimous movement in favour of Christianity? A very unfavourable one, we apprehend, to the authenticity of its evidences. Will the infidel say, that he has a higher respect for the credibility of those miracles which ushered in the dispensation of Moses, because they were exhibited in the face of a whole people, and gained their unexcepted submission to the laws and the ritual of Judaism? This new revolution would have received the same ex-

planation. We would have heard of its being sanctioned by their prophecies, of its being agreeable to their prejudices, of its being supported by the countenance and encouragement of their priesthood, and that the jugglery of its miracles imposed upon all, because all were willing to be deceived by them. The actual form in which the history has come down, presents us with an argument free of all these exceptions. We, in the first instance, behold a number of proselytes, whose testimony to the facts of Christianity is approved of by what they lost and suffered in the maintenance of their faith; and we, in the second instance, behold a number of enemies, eager, vigilant, and exasperated, at the progress of the new religion, who have not questioned the authenticity of our histories, and whose silence, as to the public and widely talked of miracles of Christ and his apostles, we have a right to interpret into the most triumphant of all testimonies.

The same process of reasoning is applicable to the case of the Gentiles. Many adopted the new religion, and many rejected it. We may not be sure, if we can give an adequate explanation of the conduct of the latter, on the supposition that the evidences are true; but we are perfectly sure, that we can give no adequate explanation of the conduct of the former, on the supposition that the evidences are false. For any thing we know, it is possible that the one party may have adhered to their former prejudices, in opposition to all the force and urgency of argument, which even an authentic miracle carries along with it. But we know that it is not possible that the other party should renounce these prejudices, and that too in the face of danger and persecution, unless the miracles had been authentic. So great is the difference between the strength of the argument and the strength of the objection, that we count

it fortunate for the merits of the cause, that the conversions to Christianity were partial. We, in this way, secure all the support which is derived from the inexplicable fact of the silence of its enemies, inexplicable on every supposition, but the undeniable evidence and certainty of the miracles. Had the Roman empire made a unanimous movement to the new religion, and all the authorities of the state lent their concurrence to it, there would have been a suspicion annexed to the whole history of the Gospel, which cannot at present apply to it; and from the collision of the opposite parties, the truth has come down to us in a far more unquestionable form than if no such collision had been excited.

The silence of Heathen and Jewish writers of that period, about the miracles of Christianity, has been much insisted upon by the enemies of our religion; and has even excited something like a painful suspicion in the breasts of those who are attached to its cause. Certain it is, that no ancient facts have come down to us, supported by a greater quantity of historical evidence, and better accompanied with all the circumstances which can confer credibility on that evidence. When we demand the testimony of Tacitus to the christian miracles, we forget all the while that we can allege a multitude of much more decisive testimonies; no less than eight contemporary authors, and a train of succeeding writers, who follow one another with a closeness and a rapidity, of which there is no example in any other department of ancient history. We forget that the authenticity of these different writers, and their pretensions to credit, are founded on considerations, perfectly the same in kind, though much stronger in degree, than what have been employed to establish the testimony of the most esteemed historians of former ages. For the history of the Gospel, we behold a series of testimonies, more continuous, and more firmly sustained, than

there is any other example of in the whole compass of erudition. And to refuse this evidence, is a proof that in this investigation there is an aptitude in the human mind to abandon all ordinary principles, and to be carried away by the delusions which we have already insisted on.

But let us try the effect of that testimony which our antagonists demand. Tacitus has actually attested the existence of Jesus Christ; the reality of such a personage; his public execution under the administration of Pontius Pilate; the temporary check which this gave to the progress of his religion; its revival a short time after his death; its progress over the land of Judea, and to Rome itself, the metropolis of the empire;—all this we have in a Roman historian; and, in opposition to all established reasoning upon these subjects, it is by some more firmly confided in upon his testimony, than upon the numerous and concurring testimonies of nearer and contemporary writers. But be this as it may, let us suppose that Tacitus had thrown one particular more into his testimony, and that his sentence had run thus: "They had their denomination from Christus, who, in the reign of Tiberius, was put to death as a criminal by the procurator Pontius Pilate, *and who rose from the dead on the third day after his execution, and ascended into heaven.*" Does it not strike every body, that however true the last piece of information may be, and however well established by its proper historians, this is not the place where we can expect to find it? If Tacitus did not believe the resurrection of our Saviour, (which is probably the case, as he never, in all likelihood, paid any attention to the evidence of a faith which he was led to regard, from the outset, as a pernicious superstition, and a mere modification of Judaism,) it is not to be supposed that such an assertion could ever have been made by him. If Tacitus did believe the resurrection of our Saviour, he gives us an ex-

ample of what appears not to have been uncommon in these ages—he gives us an example of a man adhering to that system which interest and education recommended, in opposition to the evidence of a miracle which he admitted to be true. Still, even on this supposition, it is the most unlikely thing in the world, that he would have admitted the fact of our Saviour's resurrection into his history. It is most improbable, that a testimony of this kind would have been given, even though the resurrection of Jesus Christ be admitted; and, therefore, the want of this testimony carries in it no argument that the resurrection is a falsehood. If, however, in opposition to all probability, this testimony had been given, it would have been appealed to as a most striking confirmation of the main fact of the evangelical history. It would have figured away in all our elementary treatises, and been referred to as a master argument in every exposition of the evidences of Christianity. Infidels would have been challenged to believe in it on the strength of their own favourite evidence, the evidence of a classical historian; and must have been at a loss how to dispose of this fact, when they saw an unbiassed heathen giving his round and unqualified testimony in its favour.

Let us now carry the supposition a step farther. Let us conceive that Tacitus not only believed the fact, and gave his testimony to it, but that he believed it so far as to become a Christian. Is his testimony to be refused, because he gives this evidence of its sincerity? Tacitus asserting the fact, and remaining a heathen, is not so strong an argument for the truth of our Saviour's resurrection, as Tacitus asserting the fact and becoming a Christian in consequence of it. Yet the moment that this transition is made—a transition by which, in point of fact, his testimony becomes stronger—in point of impression it becomes less; and, by a delusion, common to the infidel

and the believer, the argument is held to be weakened by the very circumstance which imparts greater force to it. The elegant and accomplished scholar becomes a believer. The truth, the novelty, the importance of this new subject, withdraw him from every other pursuit. He shares in the common enthusiasm of the cause, and gives all his talents and eloquence to the support of it. Instead of the Roman historian, Tacitus comes down to posterity in the shape of a Christian father, and the high authority of his name is lost in a crowd of similar testimonies.

A direct testimony to the miracles of the New Testament from the mouth of a heathen, is not to be expected. We cannot satisfy this demand of the infidel; but we can give him a host of much stronger testimonies than he is in quest of—the testimonies of those men who were heathens, and who embraced a hazardous and a disgraceful profession, under a deep conviction of those facts to which they gave their testimony. "O, but you now land us in the testimony of Christians!" This is very true; but it is the very fact of their being Christians in which the strength of the argument lies: and in each of the numerous fathers of the Christian church, we see a stronger testimony than the required testimony of the heathen Tacitus. We see men who, if they had not been Christians, would have risen to as high an eminenec as Tacitus in the literature of the times; and whose direct testimonies to the gospel history would in that case, have been most impressive, even to the mind of an infidel. And are these testimonies to be less impressive, because they were preceded by conviction, and sealed by martyrdom?

Yet though, from the nature of the case, no direct testimony to the Christian miracles from a heathen can be looked for, there are heathen testimonies which form an important accession to the Christian argument. Such are

the testimonies to the state of Judea; the testimonies to those numerous particulars in government and customs, which are so often alluded to in the New Testament, and give it the air of an authentic history; and above all, the testimonies to the sufferings of the primitive Christians, from which we learn, through a channel clear of every suspicion, that Christianity, a religion of facts, was the object of persecution at a time, when eye-witnesses taught and eye-witnesses must have bled for it.

The silence of Jewish and heathen writers, when the true interpretation is given to it, is all on the side of the Christian argument. Even though the miracles of the Gospel had been believed to be true, it is most unlikely that the enemies of the Christian religion would have given their testimony to them; and the absence of this testimony is no impeachment therefore upon the reality of these miracles. But if the miracles of the Gospel had been believed to be false, it is most likely that this falsehood would have been asserted by the Jews and heathens of that period; and the circumstance of no such assertion having been given, is a strong argument for the reality of these miracles. Their silence in not asserting the miracles, is perfectly consistent with their truth; but their silence in not denying them, is not at all consistent with their falsehood. The entire silence of Josephus upon the subject of Christianity, though he wrote after the destruction of Jerusalem, and gives us the history of that period in which Christ and his apostles lived is certainly a very striking circumstance. The sudden progress of Christianity at that time, and the fame of its miracles, (if not the miracles themselves,) form an important part of the Jewish history. How came Josephus to abstain from every particular respecting it? Will you reverse every principle of criticism, and make the silence of Josephus carry it over the positive testimony of the many historical doc-

uments which have come down to us? If you refuse every Christian testimony upon the subject, you will not refuse the testimony of Tacitus, who asserts, that this religion spread over Judea, and reached the city of Rome, and was looked upon as an evil of such importance, that it became the object of an authorised persecution by the Roman government; and all this several years before the destruction of Jerusalem, and before Josephus composed his history. Whatever opinion may be formed as to the *truth* of Christianity, certain it is, that its *progress* constituted an object of sufficient magnitude, to compel the attention of any historian who undertook the affairs of that period. How then shall we account for the scrupulous and determined exclusion of it from the history of Josephus? Had its miracles been false, this Jewish historian would gladly have exposed them. But its miracles were true, and silence was the only refuge of an antagonist, and his wisest policy.

But though we gather no direct testimony from Josephus, yet his history furnishes us with many satisfying additions to the Christian argument. In the details of policy and manners, he coincides in the main with the writers of the New Testament; and these coincidences are so numerous, and have so undesigned an appearance, as to impress on every person, who is at the trouble of making the comparison, the truth of the evangelical story.

If we are to look for direct testimonies to the miracles of the New Testament, we must look to that quarter, where alone it would be reasonable to expect them,—to the writings of the Christian fathers, men who were not Jews or heathens at the moment of recording their testimony; but who had been Jews or heathens, and who, in their transition to the ultimate state of Christians, give a stronger evidence of integrity, than if they had believed

these miracles, and persisted in a cowardly adherence to the safest profession.

We do not undertake to satisfy every demand of the infidel. We think we do enough, if we prove that the thing demanded is most unlikely, even though the miracles should be true; and therefore that the want of it carries no argument against the truth of the miracles. But we do still more than this, if we prove that the testimonies which we actually possess are much stronger than the testimonies he is in quest of. And who can doubt this, when he reflects, that the true way of putting the case between the testimony of the Christian father, which we do have, and the testimony of Tacitus, which we do not have, is, that the latter would be an assertion not followed up by that conduct, which would have been the best evidence of its sincerity; whereas the former is an assertion substantiated by the whole life, and by the decisive fact of the old profession having been renounced, and the new profession entered into,—a change where disgrace, and danger, and martyrdom were the consequences?

Let us, therefore, enter into an examination of these testimonies.

This subject has been in part anticipated, when we treated of the authenticity of the books of the New Testament. We have quotations and references to these books from five apostolic fathers, the companions of the original writers. We have their testimonies sustained and extended by their immediate successors; and as we pursue this crowded series of testimonies downwards, they become so numerous, and so explicit, as to leave no doubt on the mind of the inquirers, that the different books of the New Testament are the publications of the authors, whose names they bear; and were received by the Chris-

tian world, as books of authority, from the first period of their appearance.

Now, every sentence in a Christian father, expressive of respect for a book in the New Testament, is also expressive of his faith in its contents. It is equivalent to his testimony for the miracles recorded in it. In the language of the law, it is an act by which he homologates the record, and superinduces his own testimony to that of the original writers. It would be vain to attempt speaking of all these testimonies. It cost the assiduous Lardner many years to collect them. They are exhibited in his credibility of the New Testament; and in the multitude of them, we see a power and a variety of evidence for the Christian miracles, which is quite unequalled in the whole compass of ancient history.

But, in addition to these testimonies in the gross, for the truth of the evangelical history, have we no distinct testimonies to the individual facts which compose it? We have no doubt of the fact, that Barnabas was acquainted with the Gospel by Matthew, and that he subscribed to all the information contained in that history. This is a most valuable testimony from a contemporary writer; and a testimony which embraces all the miracles narrated by the evangelist. But, in addition to this, we should like if Barnabas, upon his own personal conviction, could assert the reality of any of these miracles. It would be multiplying the original testimonies; for he was a companion and a fellow-labourer of the apostles. We should have been delighted, if, in the course of our researches into the literature of past times, we had met with an authentic record, written by one of the five hundred, that are said to have seen our Saviour after his resurrection, and adding his own narrative of this event to the narratives that have already come down to us. Now, is any thing of this kind to be met with in ecclesiastical an-

tiquity? How much of this kind of evidence are we in actual possession of? and if we have not enough to satisfy our keen appetite for evidence on a question of such magnitude, how is the want of it to be accounted for?

Let it be observed, then, that of the twenty seven books which make up the New Testament, five are narrative or historical, viz. the four Gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles, which relate to the life and miracles of our Saviour, and the progress of his religion through the world, for a good many years after his ascension into heaven. All the rest, with the exception of the Revelation of St. John, are doctrinal or admonitory; and their main object is to explain the principles of the new religion, or to impress its duties upon the numerous proselytes who had even at that early period been gained over to the profession of Christianity.

Besides what we have in the New Testament, no other professed narrative of the miracles of Christianity has come down to us, bearing the marks of an authentic composition by any apostle, or any contemporary of the apostles. Now, to those, who regret this circumstance, we beg leave to submit the following observations. Suppose that one other narrative of the life and miracles of our Saviour had been composed, and, to give all the value to this additional testimony of which it is susceptible, let us suppose it to be the work of an apostle. By this last circumstance, we secure to its uttermost extent the advantage of an original testimony, the testimony of another eye-witness, and constant companion of our Saviour. Now, we ask, what would have been the fate of this performance? It would have been incorporated into the New Testament along with the other gospels. It may have been the Gospel according to Philip. It may have been the Gospel according to Bartholomew. At all events, the whole amount of the advantage would have been the sub-

stitution of five Gospels instead of four, and this addition, the want of which is so much complained of, would scarcely have been felt by the Christian, or acknowledged by the infidel, to strengthen the evidence of which we are already in possession.

But to vary the supposition, let us suppose that the narrative wanted, instead of being the work of an apostle, had been the work of some other contemporary, who writes upon his own original knowledge of the subject, but was not so closely associated with Christ, or his immediate disciples, as to have his history admitted into the canonical scriptures. Had this history been preserved, it would have been transmitted to us in a separate state; it would have stood out from among that collection of writings, which passes under the general name of the New Testament, and the additional evidence thus afforded, would have come down in the form most satisfactory to those with whom we are maintaining our present argument. Yet though, in point of form, the testimony might be more satisfactory; in point of fact, it would be less so. It is the testimony of a less competent witness,—a witness who, in the judgment of his contemporaries, wanted those accomplishments which entitled him to a place in the New Testament. There must be some delusion operating upon the understanding, if we think that a circumstance, which renders an historian less accredited in the eyes of his own age, should render him more accredited in the eyes of posterity. Had Mark been kept out of the New Testament, he would have come down to us in that form, which would have made his testimony more impressive to a superficial inquirer; yet there would be no good reason for keeping him out, but precisely that reason which should render his testimony less impressive. We do not complain of this anxiety for more evidence, and as much of it as possible; but it is

right to be told, that the evidence we have is of far more value than the evidence demanded, and that, in the concurrence of four canonical narratives, we see a far more effectual argument for the miracles of the New Testament, than in any number of those separate and extraneous narratives, the want of which is so much felt, and so much complained of.

That the New Testament is not one, but a collection of many testimonies, is what has been often said, and often acquiesced in. Yet even after the argument is formally acceded to, its impression is unfelt; and on this subject there is a great and an obstinate delusion, which not only confirms the infidel in his disregard to Christianity, but even veils the strength of the evidence from its warmest admirers.

There is a difference between a mere narrative and a work of speculation or morality. The latter subjects embrace a wider range, admit a greater variety of illustration, and are quite endless in their application to the new cases that occur in the ever-changing history of human affairs. The subject of a narrative again admits of being exhausted. It is limited by the number of actual events. True, you may expatiate upon the character or importance of these events, but, in so doing, you drop the office of a pure historian, for that of the politician, or the moralist, or the divine. The evangelists give us a very chaste and perfect example of the pure narrative. They never appear in their own persons, or arrest the progress of the history for a single moment, by interposing their own wisdom, or their own piety. A gospel is a bare relation of what has been said or done; and it is evident that, after a few good compositions of this kind, any future attempts would be superfluous and uncalled for.

But, in point of fact, these attempts were made. It is to be supposed, that, after the singular events of our

Saviour's history, the curiosity of the public would be awakened, and there would be a demand for written accounts of such wonderful transactions. These written accounts were accordingly brought forward. Even in the interval of time between the ascension of our Saviour, and the publication of the earliest Gospel, such written histories seem to have been frequent. "Many," says St. Luke, (and in this he is supported by the testimony of subsequent writers,) "have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of these things." Now what has been the fate of all these performances? Such as might have been anticipated. They fell into disuse and oblivion. There is no evil design ascribed to the authors of them. They may have been written with perfect integrity, and been useful for a short time, and within a limited circle; but, as was natural, they all gave way to the superior authority, and more complete information, of our present narratives. The demand of the christian world was withdrawn from the less esteemed, to the more esteemed histories of our Saviour. The former ceased to be read, and copies of them would be no longer transcribed or multiplied. We cannot find the testimony we are in quest of, not because it was never given, but because the early Christians, who were the most competent judges of that testimony, did not think it worthy of being transmitted to us.

But, though the number of narratives be necessarily limited by the nature of the subject, there is no such limitation upon works of a moral, didactic, or explanatory kind. Many such pieces have come down to us, both from the apostles themselves, and from the earlier fathers of the church. Now, though the object of these compositions is not to deliver any narrative of the Christian miracles, they may perhaps give us some occasional intimation of them. They may proceed upon their reality. We

may gather either from incidental passages, or from the general scope of the performance, that the miracles of Christ and his apostles were recognised, and the divinity of our religion acknowledged, as founded upon these miracles.

The first piece of the kind with which we meet, besides the writings of the New Testament, is an epistle ascribed to Barnabas, and, at all events, the production of a man, who lived in the days of the apostles. It consists of an exhortation to constancy in the christian profession, a dissuasive from Judaism, and other moral instructions. We shall only give a quotation of a single clause from this work. "And he (i. e. our Saviour) making great signs and prodigies to the people of the Jews, they neither believed nor loved him."

The next piece in the succession of christian writers, is the undoubted epistle of Clement, the bishop of Rome, to the church of Corinth, and who, by the concurrent voice of all antiquity, is the same Clement who is mentioned in the epistle to the Philippians, as the fellow-labourer of Paul. It is written in the name of the church of Rome, and the object of it is to compose certain dissensions which had arisen in the church of Corinth. It was out of his way to enter into any thing like a formal narrative of the miraculous facts which are to be found in the evangelical history. The subject of his epistle did not lead him to this; and besides the number and authority of the narratives already published, rendered an attempt of this kind altogether superfluous. Still, however, though a miracle may not be formally announced, it may be brought in incidentally, or it may be proceeded upon, or assumed as the basis of an argument. We give one or two examples of this. In one part of his epistle, he illustrates the doctrine of our resurrection from the dead, by the change and progression of natural appearances, and

he ushers in this illustration with the following sentence: "Let us consider, my beloved, how the Lord shews us our future resurrection perpetually, of which he made the Lord Jesus Christ the first fruits, by raising him from the dead." This incidental way of bringing in the fact of of our Lord's resurrection, appears to us the strongest possible form in which the testimony of Clement could have come down to us. It is brought forward in the most confident and unembarrassed manner. He does not stop to confirm this fact by any strong asseveration, nor does he carry, in his manner of announcing it, the most remote suspicion of its being resisted by the incredulity of those to whom he is addressing himself. It wears the air of an acknowledged truth, a thing understood and acquiesced in by all the parties in this correspondence. The direct narrative of the evangelists gives us their original testimony to the miracles of the Gospel. The artless and indirect allusions of the apostolic fathers, give us not merely their faith in this testimony, but the faith of the whole societies to which they write. They let us see, not merely that such a testimony was given, but that such a testimony was generally believed, and that too at a time when the facts in question lay within the memory of living witnesses.

In another part, speaking of the apostles, Clement says, that "receiving the commandments, and being filled with full certainty by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and confirmed by the word of God, with the assurance of the Holy Spirit, they went out announcing the advent of the kingdom of God.

It was no object in those days, for a Christian writer to come over the miracles of the New Testament, with the view of lending his formal and explicit testimony to them. This testimony had already been completed to the satisfaction of the whole Christian world. If much

additional testimony has not been given, it is because it was not called for. But we ought to see, that every Christian writer, in the fact of his being a Christian, in his expressed reverence for the books of the New Testament, and in his numerous allusions to the leading points of the Gospel history, has given as satisfying evidence to the truth of the Christian miracles, as if he had left behind him a copious and distinct narrative.

Of all the miracles of the Gospel, it was to be supposed, that the resurrection of our Saviour would be oftenest appealed to; not as an evidence of his being a teacher,—for that was a point so settled in the mind of every Christian, that a written exposition of the argument was no longer necessary,—but as a motive to constancy in the Christian profession, and as the great pillar of hope in our own immortality. We accordingly meet with the most free and confident allusions to this fact in the early fathers. We meet with five intimations of this fact in the undoubted epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians : a father who had been educated by the apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ.

It is quite unnecessary to exhibit passages from the epistles of Ignatius to the same effect, or to pursue the examination downwards through the series of written testimonies. It is enough to announce it as a general fact, that, in the very first age of the Christian church, the teachers of this religion proceeded as confidently upon the reality of Christ's miracles and resurrection in their addresses to the people, as the teachers of the present day : Or, in other words, that they were as little afraid of being resisted by the incredulity of the people, at a time when the evidence of the facts was accessible to all, and habit and prejudice were against them, as we are of being resisted by the incredulity of an unlettered multitude, who listen to us with all the veneration of a hereditary faith.

There are five apostolic fathers, and a series of Christian writers who follow after them in rapid succession. To give an idea to those who are not conversant in the study of ecclesiastical antiquities, how well sustained the chain of testimony is from the first age of Christianity, we shall give a passage from a letter of Irenæus, preserved by Eusebius. We have no less than nine compositions from different authors, which fill up the interval between him and Polycarp; and yet this is the way in which he speaks, in his old age, of the venerable Polycarp, in a letter to Florinus. "I saw you, when I was very young, in the Lower Asia with Polycarp. For I better remember the affairs of that time than those which have lately happened: the things which we learn in our childhood growing up in the soul, and uniting themselves to it. Insomuch, that I can tell the place in which the blessed Polycarp sat and taught, and his going out, and coming in, and the manner of his life, and the form of his person, and his discourses to the people; and how he related his conversation with John, and others who had seen the Lord; and how he related their sayings, and what he had heard from them concerning the Lord, both concerning his miracles and his doctrines, as he had received them from the eye-witnesses of the Word of Life: all which Polycarp related agreeably to the Scriptures. These things I then, through the mercy of God towards me, diligently heard and attended to, recording them not on paper, but upon my heart."

Now is the time to exhibit to full advantage the argument which the different epistles of the New Test. afford. They are, in fact, so many distinct and additional testimonies. If the testimonies drawn from the writings of the Christian fathers are calculated to make any impression, then the testimonies of these epistles, where there is no delusion, and no prejudice in the mind of the inquirer, must

make a greater impression. They are more ancient, and were held to be of greater authority by competent judges. They were held sufficient by the men of those days, who were nearer to the sources of evidence; and they ought, therefore, to be held sufficient by us. The early persecuted Christians had too great an interest in the grounds of their faith, to make a light and superficial examination. We may safely commit the decision to them; and the decision they have made, is, that the authors of the different epistles in the New Testament, were worthier of their confidence, as witnesses of the truth, than the authors of those compositions which were left out of the collection, and maintain, in our eye, the form of a separate testimony. By what unaccountable tendency is it, that we feel disposed to reverse this decision, and to repose more faith in the testimony of subsequent and less esteemed writers? Is there any thing in the confidence given to Peter and Paul by their contemporaries, which renders them unworthy of ours? or, is the testimony of their writings less valuable and less impressive, because the Christians of old have received them as the best vouchers of their faith?

It gives us a far more satisfying impression than ever of the truth of our religion, when, in addition to several distinct and independent narratives of its history, we meet with a number of contemporaneous productions addressed to different societies, and all proceeding upon the truth of that history, as an agreed and unquestionable point among the different parties in the correspondence. Had that history been a fabrication, in what manner, we ask, would it have been followed up by the subsequent compositions of those numerous agents in the work of deception? How comes it, that they have betrayed no symptom of that insecurity which it would have been so natural to feel in their circumstances? Through the whole of these epistles, we see nothing like the awkward

or embarrassed air of impostors. We see no anxiety, either to mend or to confirm the history that had already been given. We see no contest which they might have been called upon to maintain with the incredulity of their converts, as to the miracles of the Gospel. We see the most intrepid remonstrance against errors of conduct, or discipline, or doctrine. This savours strongly of upright and independent teachers; but is it not a most striking circumstance, that, among the severe reckonings which St. Paul had with some of his churches, he was never once called upon to school their doubts, or their suspicions, as to the reality of the Christian miracles? This is a point universally acquiesced in; and, from the general strain of these epistles, we collect, not merely the testimony of their authors, but the unsuspected testimony of all to whom they addressed themselves.

And let it never be forgotten, that the Christians, who composed these churches, were in every way well qualified to be arbiters in this question. They had the first authorities within their reach. The five hundred who, Paul says to them, had seen our Saviour after his resurrection, could be sought after; and, if not to be found, Paul would have had his assertion to answer for. In some cases, they were the first authorities themselves, and had therefore no confirmation to go in search of. He appeals to the miracles which had been wrought among them, and in this way he commits the question to their own experience. He asserts this to the Galatians; and at the very time, too, that he is delivering against them a most severe and irritating invective. He intimates the same thing repeatedly to the Corinthians; and after he had put his honesty to so severe a trial, does he betray any insecurity as to his character and reputation among them? So far from this, that in arguing the general doctrine of the resurrection from the dead, as the most ef-

fectual method of securing assent to it, he rests the main part of the argument upon their confidence in his fidelity as a witness. "But if there be no resurrection from the dead, then is Christ not risen.—Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God, that he raised up Christ, whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not." Where, we ask, would have been the mighty charm of this argument, if Paul's fidelity had been questioned; and how shall we account for the free and intrepid manner in which he advances it, if the miracles which he refers to, as wrought among them, had been nullities of his own invention?

For the truth of the Gospel history, we can appeal to one strong and unbroken series of testimonies from the days of the apostles. But the great strength of the evidence lies in that effulgence of testimony, which enlightens this history at its commencement—in the number of its original witnesses—in the distinct and independent records which they left behind them, and in the undoubted faith they bore among the numerous societies which they instituted. The concurrence of the apostolic fathers, and their immediate successors, forms a very strong and a very satisfying argument; but let it be further remembered, that out of the materials which compose, if we may be allowed the expression, the original charter of our faith, we can select a stronger body of evidence than it is possible to form out of the whole mass of subsequent testimonies.

CHAP. VI.

REMARKS ON THE ARGUMENT FROM PROPHECY.

VI. PROPHECY is another species of evidence to which Christianity professes an abundant claim, and which can be established on evidence altogether distinct from the testimony of its supporters. The prediction of what is future may not be delivered in terms so clear and intelligible as the history of what is past; and yet, in its actual fulfilment, it may leave no doubt on the mind of the inquirer that it was a prediction, and that the event in question was in the contemplation of him who uttered it. It may be easy to dispose of one isolated prophecy, by ascribing it to accident; but when we observe a number of these prophecies, delivered in different ages, and all bearing an application to the same events, or the same individual, it is difficult to resist the impression that they were actuated by a knowledge superior to human.

The obscurity of the prophetical language has been often complained of; but it is not so often attended to, that if the prophecy which foretels an event were as clear as the narrative which describes it, it would in many cases annihilate the argument. Were the history of any individual foretold in terms as explicit as it is in the power of narrative to make them, it might be competent for any usurper to set himself forward, and in as far as it depended upon his own agency, he might realize that history. He has no more to do than to take his lesson from the

prophecy before him; but could it be said that fulfilment like this carried in it the evidence of any thing divine or miraculous? If the prophecy of a Prince and a Saviour, in the Old Testament, were different from what they are, and delivered in the precise and intelligible terms of an actual history; then every accomplishment which could be brought about by the agency of those who understood the prophecy, and were anxious for its verification, is lost to the argument. It would be instantly said that the agents in the transaction took their clue from the prophecy before them. It is the way, in fact, in which infidels have attempted to evade the argument as it actually stands. In the New Testament, an event is sometimes said to happen, that *it might be fulfilled* what was spoken by some of the old prophets. If every event which enters into the Gospel had been under the controul of agents merely human, and friends to Christianity; then we might have had reason to pronounce the whole history to be one continued process of artful and designed accommodation to the Old Testament prophecies. But the truth is, that many of the events pointed at in the Old Testament, so far from being brought about by the agency of Christians, were brought about in opposition to their most anxious wishes. Some of them were brought about by the agency of their most decided enemies; and some of them, such as the dissolution of the Jewish state, and the dispersion of its people among all countries, were quite beyond the controul of the apostles and their followers, and were effected by the intervention of a neutral party, which at the time took no interest in the question, and which was a stranger to the prophecy, though the unconscious instrument of its fulfilment.

Lord Bolingbroke has carried the objection so far, that he asserts Jesus Christ to have brought on his own death, by a series of wilful and preconcerted measures,

merely to give the disciples who came after him the triumph of an appeal to the old prophecies. This is ridiculous enough; but it serves to show with what facility an infidel might have evaded the whole argument, had these prophecies been free of all that obscurity which is now so loudly complained of.

The best form, for the purposes of argument, in which a prophecy can be delivered, is to be so obscure, as to leave the event, or rather its main circumstances, unintelligible before the fulfilment, and so clear as to be intelligible after it. It is easy to conceive that this may be an attainable object; and it is saying much for the argument as it stands, that the happiest illustrations of this clearness on the one hand, and this obscurity on the other, are to be gathered from the actual prophecies of the Old Testament.

It is not, however, by this part of the argument, that we expect to reclaim the enemy of our religion from his infidelity; not that the examination would not satisfy him, but that the examination will not be given. What a violence it would be offering to all his antipathies, were we to land him, at the outset of our discussions, among the chapters of Daniel or Isaiah! He has too inveterate a contempt for the Bible. He nauseates the whole subject too strongly to be prevailed upon to accompany us to such an exercise. On such a subject as this, there is no contract, no approximation between us; and we therefore leave him with the assertion, (an assertion which he has no title to pronounce upon, till after he has finished the very examination in which we are most anxious to engage him,) that in the numerous prophecies of the Old Testament, there is such a multitude of allusions to the events of the New, as will give a strong impression to the mind of every inquirer, that the whole forms one magnificent series of communications between the visible and the in-

visible world; a great plan over which the unseen God presides in wisdom, and which, beginning with the first ages of the world, is still receiving new developements from every great step in the history of the species.

It is impossible to give a complete exposition of this argument without an actual reference to the prophecies themselves; and this we at present abstain from. But it can be conceived, that a prophecy, when first announced, may be so obscure, as to be unintelligible in many of its circumstances; and yet may so far explain itself by its accomplishment, as to carry along with it the most decisive evidence of its being a prophecy. And the argument may be so far strengthened by the number, and distance, and independence, of the different prophecies, all bearing an application to the same individual and the same history, as to leave no doubt on the mind of the observer, that the events in question were in the actual contemplation of those who uttered the prediction. If the terms of the prophecy were not comprehended, it at least takes off the suspicion of the event being brought about by the controul or agency of men who were interested in the accomplishment. If the prophecies of the Old Testament are just invested in such a degree of obscurity, as is enough to disguise many of the leading circumstances from those who lived before the fulfilment,—while they derive from the event an explanation satisfying to all who live after it, then, we say, the argument for the divinity of the whole is stronger, than if no such obscurity had existed. In the history of the New Testament, we see a natural and consistent account of the delusion respecting the Messiah, in which this obscurity had left the Jewish people; of the strong prejudices, even of the first disciples; of the manner in which these prejudices were dissipated, only by the accomplishment; and of their final conviction in the import of these prophecies being at last

so strong, that it often forms their main argument for the divinity of that new religion which they were commissioned to publish to the world. Now, assuming, what we still persist in asserting, and ask to be tried upon, that an actual comparison of the prophecies in the Old Testament, with their alleged fulfilment in the New, will leave a conviction behind it, that there is a real correspondence between them; we see, in the great events of the new dispensation brought about by the blind instrumentality of prejudice and opposition, far more unambiguous characters of the finger of God, than if every thing had happened with the full concurrence and anticipation of the different actors in this history.

There is another essential part of the argument, which is much strengthened by this obscurity. It is necessary to fix the date of the prophecies, or to establish, at least, that the time of their publication was antecedent to the events to which they refer. Now, had these prophecies been delivered in terms so explicit, as to force the concurrence of the whole Jewish nation, the argument for their antiquity, would not have come down in a form as satisfying, as that in which it is actually exhibited. The testimony of the Jews, to the date of their sacred writings, would have been refused as an interested testimony. Whereas, to evade the argument as it stands, we must admit a principle, which, in no question of ordinary criticism, would be suffered for a single moment to influence your understanding. We must conceive, that two parties, at the very time that they were influenced by the strongest mutual hostility, combined to support a fabrication; that they have not violated this combination; that the numerous writers on both sides of the question have not suffered the slightest hint of this mysterious compact to escape them; and that, though the Jews are galled incessantly by the triumphant tone of the Christian appeals to their

own prophecies, they have never been tempted to let out a secret, which would have brought the argument of the Christians into disgrace, and shown the world, how falsehood and forgery mingled with their pretensions.

In the rivalry which, from the very commencement of our religion, has always obtained between Jews and Christians, in the mutual animosities of Christian sects, in the vast multiplication of copies of the Scriptures, in the distant and independent societies which were scattered over so many countries, we see the most satisfying pledge, both for the integrity of the sacred writings, and for the date which all parties agree in ascribing to them. We hear of the many securities which have been provided in the various forms of registrations, and duplicates, and depositories; but neither the wisdom, nor the interest of men, ever provided more effectual checks against forgery and corruption, than we have in the instance before us. And the argument, in particular, for the antecedence of the prophecies to the events in the New Testament, is so well established by the concurrence of the two rival parties, that we do not see, how it is in the power of additional testimony to strengthen it.

But neither is it true, that the prophecies are delivered in terms so obscure, as to require a painful examination, before we can obtain a full perception of the argument. Those prophecies which relate to the fate of particular cities, such as Nineveh, and Tyre, and Babylon; those which relate to the issue of particular wars, in which the kings of Israel and Judah were engaged; and some of those which relate to the future history of the adjoining countries, are not so much veiled by symbolical language, as to elude the understanding, even of the most negligent observers. It is true, that in these instances, both the prophecy and the fulfilment appear to us in the light of a distant antiquity. They have accomplished their end.

They kept alive the faith and worship of successive generations. They multiplied the evidences of the true religion, and account for a phenomenon in ancient history that is otherwise inexplicable, the existence and preservation of one solitary monument of pure theism in the midst of a corrupt and idolatrous world.

But to descend a little farther. We gather from the state of opinions at the time of our Saviour so many testimonies to the clearness of the old prophecies. The time and the place of our Saviour's appearance in the world, and the triumphant progress, if not the nature of his kingdom, were perfectly understood by the priests and chief men of Judea. We have it from the testimony of profane authors, that there was, at that time, a general expectation of a prince and a prophet all over the East. The destruction of Jerusalem was another example of the fulfilment of a clear prophecy; and this, added to other predictions uttered by our Saviour, and which received their accomplishment in the first generation of the christian church, would have its use in sustaining the faith of the disciples amidst the perplexities of that anxious and distressing period.

We can even come down to the present day, and point to the accomplishment of clear prophecies in the actual history of the world. The present state of Egypt, and the present state of the Jews, are the examples which we fix upon. The one is an actual fulfilment of a clear prophecy; the other is also an actual fulfilment, and forms in itself the likeliest preparation for another accomplishment that is yet to come. Nor do we conceive, that these clear and literal fulfilments exhaust the whole of the argument from prophecy. They only form one part of the argument, but a part so obvious and irresistible, as should invite every lover of truth to the examination of the remainder. They should secure such a degree of re-

spect for the subject, as to engage the attention, and awaken even in the mind of the most rapid and superficial observer, a suspicion that there may be something in it. They should soften that contempt which repels so many from investigating the argument at all, or at all events, they render that contempt inexcusable.

The whole history of the Jews is calculated to allure the curiosity, and had it not been leagued with the defence and illustration of our faith, would have drawn the attention of many a philosopher, as the most singular exhibition of human nature that ever was recorded in the annals of the world. The most satisfying cause of this phenomenon is to be looked for in the history, which describes its origin and progress; and by denying the truth of that history, you abandon the only explanation which can be given of this wonderful people. It is quite in vain to talk of the immutability of Eastern habits, as exemplified in the nations of Asia. What other people ever survived the same annihilating processes? We do not talk of conquest, where the whole amount of the effect is in general a change of dinasty or of government; but where the language, the habits, the denomination, and above all, the geographical position, still remain to keep up the identity of the people. But in the history of the Jews, we see a strong indestructible principle, which maintained them in a separate form of existence amid changes that no other nation ever survived. We confine ourselves to the overthrow of their nation in the first century of our epoch, and appeal to the disinterested testimonies of Tacitus and Josephus, if ever the cruelty of war devised a process of more terrible energy for the utter extirpation of a name, and a remembrance from the world. They have been dispersed among all countries. They have no common tie of locality or government to keep them together. All the ordinary principles of assimilation, which make law,

and religion, and manners, so much a matter of geography, are in their instance suspended. Even the smallest particles of this broken mass have resisted an affinity of almost universal operation, and remain undiluted by the strong and overwhelming admixture of foreign ingredients. And in exception to every thing which history has recorded of the revolutions of the species, we see in this wonderful race a vigorous principle of indentity, which has remained in undiminished force for nearly two thousand years, and still pervades every shred and fragment of their widely scattered population. Now, if the infidel insists upon it, we shall not rest on this as an argument. We can afford to give it up : for in the abundance of our resources, we feel independent of it. We shall say that it is enough, if it can reclaim him from his levity, and compel his attention to the other evidences which we have to offer him. All we ask of him is to allow, that the undeniable singularity which is before his eyes, gives him a sanction at least, to examine the other singularities to which we make pretensions. If he goes back to the past history of the Jews, he will see in their wars the same unexampled preservation of their name and their nation. He will see them surviving the process of an actual transportation into another country. In short, he will see them to be unlike all other people in what observation offers, and authentic history records of them ; and the only concession that we demand of him from all this, is, that their pretension to be unlike other people in their extraordinary revelations from heaven is at least possible, and deserves to be inquired into.

It may not be out of place to expose a species of injustice, which has often been done to the Christian argument. The defence of Christianity consists of several distinct arguments, which have sometimes been multiplied beyond what is necessary, and even sometimes beyond

what is tenable. In addition to the main evidence which lies in the testimony given to the miracles of the Gospel, there is the evidence of prophecy; there is the evidence of collateral testimony; there is the internal evidence. The argument under each of these heads, is often made to undergo a farther subdivision; and it is not to be wondered at, that in the multitude of observations, the defence of Christianity may often be made to rest upon ground, which, to say the least of it, is precarious or vulnerable. Now the injustice which we complain of is, that when the friends of our religion are dislodged from some feeble outwork, raised by an unskilful officer in the cause, its enemies raise the cry of a decisive victory. But, for our own part, we could see her driven from all her defences, and surrender them without a sigh, so long as the phalanx of her historical evidence remains impenetrable. Behind this unscaled barrier, we could entrench ourselves, and eye the light skirmishing before us with no other sentiment than of regret, that our friends should, by the eagerness of their misplaced zeal, have given our enemy the appearance of a triumph.

We offer no opinion as to the two-fold interpretation of prophecy; but though it were refuted by argument, and disgraced by ridicule, all that portion of evidence which lies in the numerous examples of literal and unambiguous fulfilment remains unaffected by it. Many there are, who deny the inspiration of the Song of Solomon. But in what possible way does this affect the records of the evangelical history? Just as much as it effects the lives of Plutarch, or the Annals of Tacitus. There are a thousand subjects on which infidels may idly push the triumph, and Christians be as idly galled by the severity, or even the truth of their observations. We point to the historical evidence of the New Testament, and ask them to dispose of it. It is there, that we call them to the

onset; for there lies the main strength of the Christian argument. It is true, that in the evidence of prophecy, we see a rising barrier, which, in the progress of centuries, may receive from time to time a new accumulation to the materials which form it. In this way, the evidence of prophecy may come in time to surpass the evidence of miracles. The restoration of the Jews will be the fulfilment of a clear prophecy, and form a proud and animating period in the history of our religion. "Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness!"

CHAP. VII.

REMARKS ON THE SCEPTICISM OF GEOLOGISTS.

VII. The late speculations in geology form another example of a distant and unconnected circumstance, being suffered to cast an unmerited disgrace over the whole of the argument. They give a higher antiquity to the world, than most of those who read the Bible had any conception of. Admit this antiquity, and in what possible way does it touch upon the historical evidence for the New Testament? The credibility of the Gospel miracles stands upon its own appropriate foundation, the recorded testimony of numerous and unexceptionable witnesses. The only way in which we can overthrow that credibility is by attacking the testimony, or disproving the authenticity of the record. Every other science is tried upon its own peculiar evidence; and all we contend for is, that the same justice be done to theology. When a mathematician offers to apply his reasoning to the phenomena of mind, the votaries of moral science resent it as an invasion, and make their appeal to the evidence of consciousness. When an amateur of botany, upon some vague analogies, offers his confident affirmations as to the structure and parts of the human body, there would be an instantaneous appeal to the knife and demonstrations of the anatomist. Should a mineralogist, upon the exhibition of an ingenious or well-supported theory, pronounce upon the history of our Saviour and his miracles, we would call it another example

of an arbitrary and unphilosophical extension of principles beyond the field of their legitimate application. We would appeal to the kind and the quantity of testimony upon which that history is supported. We would suffer ourselves to be delighted by the brilliancy, or even convinced by the evidence of his speculations; but we would feel that the history of those facts, which form the groundwork of our faith, is as little affected by them, as the history of any storm, or battle, or warrior, which has come down to us in the most genuine and approved records of past ages.

But whatever be the external evidence of testimony, or however strong may be its visible characters of truth and honesty, is not the falsehood or the contradiction which we may detect in the subject of that testimony sufficient to discredit it? Had we been original spectators of our Saviour's miracles, we must have had as strong a conviction of their reality, as it is in the power of testimony to give us. Had we been the eye-witnesses of his character and history, and caught from actual observation the impression of his worth, the internal proofs, that no jugglery or falsehood could have been intended, would have been certainly as strong as the internal proofs which are now exhibited to us, and which consist in the simplicity of the narrative, and that tone of perfect honesty which pervades, in a manner so distinct and intelligible, every composition of the apostles. Yet, with all these advantages, if Jesus Christ had asserted as a truth, what we confidently knew to be a falsehood; had he, for example, upon the strength of his prophetical endowments, pronounced upon the secret of a person's age, and told us that he was thirty, when we knew him to be forty, would not this have made us stumble at all his pretensions, and, in spite of every other argument and appearance, would we not have withdrawn our confidence from him as a

teacher from God? This we allow would have been a most serious dilemma. It would have been that state of neutrality which admits of nothing positive or satisfying on either side of the question; or rather, what is still more distressing, which gives me the most positive and satisfactory appearances on both sides. We could not abandon the truth of the miracles, because we saw them. Could we give them up, we should determine on a positive rejection, and our minds would find repose in absolute infidelity. But as the case stands, it is scepticism. There is nothing like it in any other department of inquiry. We can appeal to no actual example; but a student of natural science may be made to understand the puzzle, when we ask him, how he would act, if the experiments, which he conducts under the most perfect sameness of circumstances, were to land him in opposite results? He would vary and repeat his experiments. He would try to detect the inconsistency, and would rejoice, if he at last found, that the difficulty lay in the errors of his own observation, and not in the inexplicable nature of the subject. All this he would do in anxious and repeated endeavours, before he inferred that nature persevered in no law, and that that constancy, which is the foundation of all science, was perpetually broke in upon by the most capricious and unlooked for appearances; before he would abandon himself to scepticism, and pronounce philosophy to be an impossible attainment.

It is our part to imitate this example. If Jesus Christ has, on the one hand, performed miracles, and sustained in the whole tenour of his history the character of a prophet, and, on the other hand, asserted to be true, what we undeniably know to be a falsehood, this is a dilemma which we are called upon to resolve by every principle, that can urge the human mind in the pursuit of liberal inquiry. It is not enough to say, that the phenomena in

question do not fall within the dominion of philosophy; and we therefore leave them as a fair exercise and amusement to commentators. The mathematician may say, and has said the same thing of the moralist; yet there are moralists in the world, who will prosecute their speculations in spite of him; and what is more, there are men who take a wider survey than either, who rise above these professional prejudices, and will allow that, in each department of inquiry, the subjects which offer are entitled to a candid and respectful consideration. The naturalist may pronounce the same rapid judgment upon the difficulties of the theologian; yet there ever will be theologians who feel a peculiar interest in their subject; and we trust that there ever will be men, with a higher grasp of mind than either the mere theologian, or the mere naturalist, who are ready to acknowledge the claims of truth in every quarter,—who are superior to that narrow contempt, which has made such an unhappy and malignant separation among the different orders of scientific men,—who will examine the evidences of the Gospel history, and, if they are found to be sufficient, will view the miracles of our Saviour with the same liberal and philosophic curiosity with which they would contemplate any grand phenomenon in the moral history of the species. If there really appears, on the face of this investigation, to be such a difficulty as the one in question, a philosopher of the order we are now describing will make many an anxious effort to extricate himself; he will not soon acquiesce in a scepticism, of which there is no other example in the wide field of human speculation; he will either make out the insufficiency of the historical evidence, or prove that the falsehood ascribed to Jesus Christ has no existence. He will try to dispose of one of the terms of the alleged contradiction, before he can prevail upon himself to admit both, and deliver his mind to a state of uncertainty

most painful to those who respect truth in all her departments.

We offer the above observations, not so much for the purpose of doing away a difficulty which we conscientiously believe to have no existence, as for the purpose of exposing the rapid, careless, and unphilosophical procedure of some enemies to the Christian argument. They, in the first instance, take up the rapid assumption, that Jesus Christ has, either through himself, or his immediate disciples, made an assertion as to the antiquity of the globe, which, upon the faith of their geological speculations, they know to be a falsehood. After having fastened this strain upon the subject of the testimony, they, by one summary act of the understanding, lay aside all the external evidence for the miracles and general character of our Saviour. They will not wait to be told, that this evidence is a distinct subject of examination; and that, if actually attended to, it will be found much stronger than the evidence of any other fact or history which has come down to us in the written memorials of past ages. If this evidence is to be rejected it must be rejected on its own proper grounds; but if all positive testimony, and all sound reasoning upon human affairs, go to establish it, then the existence of such proof is a phenomenon which remains to be accounted for, and must ever stand in the way of positive infidelity. Until we dispose of it, we can carry our opposition to the claims of our religion no farther than to the length of an ambiguous and mid-way scepticism. By adopting a decisive infidelity, we reject a testimony, which, of all others, has come down to us in the most perfect and unsuspicious form. We lock up a source of evidence, which is often repaired to in other questions of science and history. We cut off the authority of principles, which, if once exploded, will not terminate in the solitary mischief of darkening and destroying our theology, but will shed a

baleful uncertainty over many of the most interesting speculations on which the human mind can expatiate.

Even admitting, then, this single objection in the subject of our Saviour's testimony, the whole length to which we can legitimately carry the objection is scepticism, or that dilemma of the mind into which it is thrown by two contradictory appearances. This is the unavoidable result of admitting both terms in the alleged contradiction. Upon the strength of all the reasoning which has hitherto occupied us, we challenge the infidel to dispose of the one term, which lies in the strength of the historical evidence. But in different ways, we may dispose of the other, which lies in the alleged falsehood of our Saviour's testimony. We may deny the truth of the geological speculation; nor is it necessary to be an accomplished geologist, that we may be warranted to deny it. We appeal to the speculations of the geologists themselves. They neutralise one another, and leave us in possession of free ground for the informations of the Old Testament. Our imaginations have been much regaled by the brilliancy of their speculations, but they are so opposite to each other, that we now cease to be impressed by their evidence. But there are other ways of disposing of the supposed falsehood of our Saviour's testimony. Does he really assert what has been called the Mosaical antiquity of the world? It is true that he gives his distinct testimony to the divine legation of Moses; but does Moses ever say, that when God created the heavens and the earth, he did more at the time alluded to than transform them out of previously existing materials? Or does he ever say, that there was not an interval of many ages between the first act of creation, described in the first verse of the book of Genesis, and said to have been performed at the *beginning;* and those more detailed operations, the account of which commences at the second verse, and

which are described to us as having been performed in so many days? Or, finally, does he ever make us to understand, that the genealogies of man went any farther than to fix the antiquity of the species, and, of consequence, that they left the antiquity of the globe a free subject for the speculations of philosophers?—We do not pledge ourselves for the truth of one or all of these suppositions. Nor is it necessary that we should. It is enough that any of them is infinitely more rational than the rejection of Christianity in the face of its historical evidence. This historical evidence remains in all the obstinacy of experimental and well-attested facts; and as there are so many ways of expunging the other term in the alleged contradiction, we appeal to every enlightened reader, if it is at all candid or philosophical to suffer it to stand.

CHAP. VIII.

ON THE INTERNAL EVIDENCE, AND THE OBJECTIONS OF DEISTICAL INFIDELS.

THERE is another species of evidence for Christianity, which we have not yet noticed,—what is commonly called the *internal evidence*, consisting of those proofs that Christianity is a dispensation from heaven, which are founded upon the nature of its doctrines, and the character of the dispensation itself. The term "internal evidence" may be made, indeed, to take up more than this. We may take up the New Testament as a human composition, and without any reference to its subsequent history, or to the direct and external testimonies by which it is supported. We may collect from the performance itself such marks of truth and honesty, as entitle us to conclude, that the human agents employed in the construction of this book were men of veracity and principle. This argument has already been resorted to, and a very substantial argument it is. It is of frequent application in questions of general criticism; and upon its authority alone many of the writers of past times have been admitted into credit, and many have been condemned as unworthy of it. The numerous and correct allusions to the customs and institutions, and other statistics of the age in which the pieces of the New Testament profess to have been written, give evidence of their antiquity. The artless and undesigned way in which these allusions are in-

terwoven with the whole history, impresses upon us the perfect simplicity of the authors, and the total absence of every wish or intention to palm an imposture upon the world. And there is such a thing too as a general air of authenticity, which however difficult to resolve into particulars, gives a very close and powerful impression of truth to the narrative. There is nothing fanciful in this species of internal evidence. It carries in it all the certainty of experience, and experience too upon a familiar and well known subject,—the characters of honesty in the written testimony of our fellow men. We are often called upon in private and every-day life to exercise our judgment upon the spoken testimony of others, and we both feel and understand the powerful evidence which lies in the tone, the manner, the circumstantiality, the number, the agreement of the witnesses, and the consistency of all the particulars with what we already know from other sources of information. Now it is undeniable, that all those marks which give evidence and credibility to spoken testimony, may also exist to a very impressive degree in written testimony; and the argument founded upon them, so far from being fanciful or illegitimate, has the sanction of a principle which no philosopher will refuse; the experience of the human mind on a subject on which it is much exercised, and which lies completely within the range of its observation.

We cannot say so much, however, for the other species of internal evidence, that which is founded upon the reasonableness of the doctrines, or the agreement which is conceived to subsist between the nature of the Christian religion and the character of the Supreme Being. We have experience of man, but we have no experience of God. We can reason upon the procedure of man in given circumstances, because this is an accessible subject, and comes under the cognizance of observation; but we

cannot reason on the procedure of the Almighty in given circumstances. This is an inaccessible subject, and comes not within the limits of direct and personal observation. The one, like the scale, and compass, and measurements of Sir Isaac Newton, will lead you on safe and firm footing to the true economy of the heavens; the other, like the ether and whirlpools, and unfounded imaginations of Des Cartes, will not only lead you to misconceive that economy, but to maintain a stubborn opposition to the only competent evidence that can be offered upon the subject.

We feel that in thus disclaiming all support from what is commonly understood by the internal evidence, we do not follow the general example of those who have written on the Deistical controversy. Take up Leland's performance, and it will be found, that one half of his discussion is expended upon the reasonableness of the doctrines, and in asserting the validity of the argument which is founded upon that reasonableness. It would save a vast deal of controversy, if it could be proved that all this is superfluous and uncalled for; that upon the authority of the proofs already insisted on, the New Testament must be received as a revelation from heaven; and that, instead of sitting in judgment over it, nothing remains on our part but an act of unreserved submission to all the doctrine and information which it offers to us. It is conceived, that in this way the general argument might be made to assume a more powerful and impressive aspect; and the defence of Christianity be more accommodated to the spirit and philosophy of the times.

Since the spirit of Lord Bacon's philosophy began to be rightly understood, the science of external nature has advanced with a rapidity unexampled in the history of all former ages. The great axiom of his philosophy is so simple in its nature, and so undeniable in its evidence,

that it is astonishing how philosophers were so late in acknowledging it, or in being directed by its authority. It is more than two thousand years since the phenomena of external nature were objects of liberal curiosity to speculative and intelligent men. Yet two centuries have scarcely elapsed since the true path of investigation has been rightly pursued, and steadily persevered in; since the evidence of experience has been received as paramount to every other evidence, or, in other words, since philosophers have agreed, that the only way to learn the magnitude of an object is to measure it, the only way to learn its tangible properties is to touch it, and the only way to learn its visible properties is to look at it.

Nothing can be more safe or more infallible than the procedure of the inductive philosophy as applied to the phenomena of external nature. It is the eye, or the ear-witness of every thing which it records. It is at liberty to classify appearances, but then in the work of classifying, it must be directed only by observation. It may group phenomena according to their resemblances. It may express these resemblances in words, and announce them to the world in the form of general laws. Yet such is the hardihood of the inductive philosophy, that though a single well-attested fact should overturn a whole system, that fact must be admitted. A single experiment is often made to cut short the finest process of generalization, however painful and humiliating the sacrifice, and though a theory, the most simple and magnificent that ever charmed the eye of an enthusiast, was on the eve of emerging from it.

In submitting, then, to the rules of the inductive philosophy, we do not deny that certain sacrifices must be made, and some of the most urgent propensities of the mind, put under severe restraint and regulation. The human mind feels restless and dissatisfied under the anx-

ieties of ignorance. It longs for the repose of conviction; and to gain this repose, it will often rather precipitate its conclusions, than wait for the tardy lights of observation and experiment. There is such a thing, too, as the love of simplicity and system—a prejudice of the understanding, which disposes it to include all the phenomena of nature under a few sweeping generalities—an indolence, which loves to repose on the beauties of a theory, rather than encounter the fatiguing detail of its evidences—a painful reluctance to the admission of facts, which, however true, break in upon the majestic simplicity that we would fain ascribe to the laws and operations of the universe.

Now, it is the glory of Lord Bacon's philosophy, to have achieved a victory over all these delusions; to have disciplined the minds of its votaries into an entire submission to evidence; to have trained them up in a kind of steady coldness to all the splendour and magnificence of theory, and taught them to follow, with an unfaultering step, wherever the sure though humble path of experiment may lead them.

To justify the cautious procedure of the inductive philosophy, nothing more is necessary than to take a view of the actual powers and circumstances of humanity; of the entire ignorance of man when he comes into the world, and of the steps by which that ignorance is enlightened; of the numerous errors into which he is misled, the moment he ceases to observe, and begins to presume or to excogitate; of the actual history of science; its miserable progress, so long as categories and principles retained their ascendency in the schools; and the splendour and rapidity of its triumphs, so soon as man understood that he was nothing more than the disciple of Nature, and must take his lesson as Nature offers it to him.

What is true of the science of external nature, holds

equally true of the science and phenomena of mind. On this subject, too, the presumptuous ambition of man carried him far from the sober path of experimental inquiry. He conceived that his business was not to observe, but to speculate; to construct systems rather than consult his own experience and the experience of others; to collect the materials of his theory, not from the history of observed facts, but from a set of assumed and excogitated principles. Now the same observations apply to this department of inquiry. We must admit to be true, not what we presume, but what we find to be so. We must restrain the enterprises of fancy. A law of the human mind must be only a series of well-authenticated facts, reduced to one general description, or grouped together under some general points of resemblance. The business of the moral as well as of the natural philosopher is not to assert what he excogitates, but to record what he observes; not to amuse himself with the speculations of fancy, but to describe phenomena as he sees or as he feels them. This is the business of the moral as well as of the natural inquirer. We must extend the application of Lord Bacon's principles to moral and metaphysical subjects. It was long before this application was recognized, or acted upon by philosophers. Many of the continental speculations are still infected with the presumptuous *a priori* spirit of the old schools; though the writings of Reid and Stewart have contributed much to chase away this spirit from the metaphysics of our own country, and to bring the science of mind, as well as matter, under the entire dominion of the inductive philosophy.

These general observations we conceive to be a most direct and applicable introduction to that part of the subject which is before us. In discussing the evidence of Christianity, all that we ask of our reader is to bring along with him the same sober and inductive spirit, that

is now deemed so necessary in the prosecution of the other sciences; to abandon every system of theology, that is not supported by evidence, however much it may gratify his taste, or regale his imagination, and to admit any system of theology, that is supported by evidence, however repugnant to his feelings or his prejudices; to make conviction, in fact paramount to inclination, or to fancy; and to maintain, through the whole process of the investigation, that strength and intrepidity of character, which will follow wherever the light of argument may conduct him, though it should land him in conclusions the most nauseous and unpalatable.

We have no time to enter into causes; but the fact is undeniable. Many philosophers of the present day are disposed to nauseate every thing connected with theology. They associate something low and ignoble with the prosecution of it. They regard it, as not a fit subject for liberal inquiry. They turn away from it with disgust, as one of the humblest departments of literary exertion. We do not say that they reject its evidences, but they evade the investigation of them. They feel no conviction; not because they have established the fallacy of a single argument, but because they entertain a general dislike at the subject, and will not attend to it. They love to expatiate in the more kindred fields of science or elegant literature; and while the most respectful caution, and humility, and steadiness, are seen to preside over every department of moral and physical investigation, theology is the only subject that is suffered to remain the victim of prejudice, and of a contempt the most unjust, and the most unphilosophical.

We do not speak of this feeling as an impiety; we speak of it as an offence against the principles of just speculation. We do not speak of it as it allures the heart from the influence of religion; we speak of it as it allures the under-

standing from the influence of evidence and truth. In a word, we are not preaching against it; we reason against it. We contend that it is a transgression against the rules of the inductive philosophy. All that we want is, the application of Lord Bacon's principles to the investigation before us; and as the influence of prejudice and disgust is banished from every other department of inquiry, we conceive it fair that it should be banished from theology also, and that our subject should have the common advantage of a hearing,—where no partiality of the heart or fancy is admitted, and no other influence acknowledged than the influence of evidence over the convictions of the understanding.

Let us therefore endeavour to evince the success and felicity with which Lord Bacon's principles may be applied to the investigation before us.

According to Bacon, man is ignorant of every thing antecedent to observation; and there is not a single department of inquiry, in which he does not err the moment that he abandons it. It is true, that the greater part of every individual's knowledge is derived immediately from testimony; but it is only from testimony that brings home to his conviction the observation of others. Still it is observation which lies at the bottom of his knowledge. Still it is man taking his lesson from the actual condition of the thing which he contemplates; a condition that is altogether independent of his will, and which no speculation of his can modify or destroy. There is an obstinacy in the processes of nature, which he cannot controul. He must follow it. The construction of a system should not be a creative, but an imitative process, which admits nothing but what evidence assures us to be true, and is founded only on the lessons of experience. It is not by the exercise of a sublime and speculative ingenuity that man arrives at truth. It is by letting himself down to the

drudgery of observation. It is by descending to the sober work of seeing, and feeling, and experimenting. Wherever, in short, he has not had the benefit of his own observation, or the observation of others brought home to his conviction by credible testimony, there he is ignorant.

This is found to hold true, even in those sciences where the objects of inquiry are the most familiar and the most accessible. Before the right method of philosophising was acted upon, how grossly did philosophers misinterpret the phenomena of external nature, when a steady perseverance in the path of observation could have led them to infallible certainty! How misled in their conception of every thing around them, when, instead of making use of their senses, they delivered themselves up to the exercises of a solitary abstraction, and thought to explain every thing by the fantastic play of unmeaning terms, and imaginary principles! And, when at last set on the right path of discovery, how totally different were the results of actual observation, from those systems which antiquity had rendered venerable, and the authority of great names had recommended to the acquiescence of many centuries! This proves that, even in the most familiar subjects, man knows every thing by observation, and is ignorant of every thing without it; and that he cannot advance a single footstep in the acquirement of truth, till he bid adieu to the delusions of theory, and sternly refuse indulgence to its fondest anticipations.

Thus, there is both a humility and a hardihood in the philosophical temper. They are the same in principle, though different in display. The first is founded on a sense of ignorance, and disposes the mind of the philosopher to pay the most respectful attention to every thing that is offered in the shape of evidence. The second consists in a determined purpose to reject and to sacrifice every thing that offers to oppose the influence of evidence,

or to set itself up against its legitimate and well-established conclusions. In the ethereal whirlpools of Des Cartes, we see a transgression against the humility of the philosophical character. It is the presumption of knowledge on a subject, where the total want of observation should have confined him to the modesty of ignorance. In the Newtonian system of the world, we see both humility and hardihood. Sir Isaac commences his investigation with all the modesty of a respectful inquirer. His is the docility of a scholar, who is sensible that he has all to learn. He takes his lesson as experience offers it to him, and yields a passive obedience to the authority of this great schoolmaster. It is in his obstinate adherence to the truth which his master has given him, that the hardihood of the philosophical character begins to appear. We see him announce, with entire confidence, both the fact and its legitimate consequences. We see him not deterred by the singularity of his conclusions, and quite unmindful of that host of antipathies which the reigning taste and philosophy of the times mustered up to oppose him. We see him resisting the influence of every authority, but the authority of experience. We see that the beauty of the old system had no power to charm him from that process of investigation by which he destroyed it. We see him sitting upon its merits with the severity of a judge, unmoved by all those graces of simplicity and magnificence which the sublime genius of its inventor had thrown around it.

We look upon these two constituents of the philosophical temper, as forming the best preparation for finally terminating in the decided Christian. In appreciating the pretensions of Christianity, there is a call both upon the humility and the hardihood of every inquirer; the humility which feels its own ignorance, and submits without reserve to whatever comes before it in the

shape of authentic and well-established evidence; and the hardihood, which sacrifices every taste and every prejudice at the shrine of conviction, which defies the scorn of a pretended philosophy, which is not ashamed of a profession that some conceive to be degraded by the homage of the superstitious vulgar, which can bring down its mind to the homeliness of the Gospel, and renounce, without a sigh, all that is elegant, and splendid, and fascinating, in the speculations of moralists. In attending to the complexion of the Christian argument, we are widely mistaken, if it is not precisely that kind of argument which will be most readily admitted by those whose minds have been trained to the soundest habits of philosophical investigation; and if that spirit of cautious and sober-minded inquiry to which modern science stands indebted for all her triumphs, is not the very indentical spirit which leads us to "cast down all our lofty imaginations, and to bring every thought into the captivity of the obedience of Christ."

On entering into any department of inquiry, the best preparation is that docility of mind which is founded on a sense of our total ignorance of the subject; and nothing is looked upon as more unphilosophical than the temerity of that *a priori* spirit, which disposes many to presume before they investigate. But if we admit the total ignorance of man antecedent to observation, even in those sciences where the objects of inquiry are the nearest and the most familiar, we will be more ready to admit his total ignorance of those subjects which are more remote and more inaccessible. If caution and modesty be esteemed so philosophical, even when employed in that little field of investigation which comes within the range of our senses; why should they not be esteemed philosophical when employed on a subject so vast, so awful, so remote from direct and personal observation, as the government of

God? There can be nothing so completely above us, and beyond us, as the plans of the Infinite Mind, which extend to all time, and embrace all worlds. There is no subject to which the cautious and humble spirit of Lord Bacon's philosophy is more applicable; nor can we conceive a more glaring rebellion against the authority of his maxims, than for the beings of a day to sit in judgment upon the Eternal, and apply their paltry experience to the counsels of his high and unfathomable wisdom. We do not speak of it as impious; we speak of it as unphilosophical. We are not bringing the decrees of the orthodox to bear against it; we are bringing the principles of our modern and enlightened schools. We are applying the very same principles to a system of theism, that we would do to a system of geology. Both may regale the fancy with the grandeur of their contemplations; both may receive embellishment from the genius and imagination of their inventors; both may carry us along with the powers of a captivating eloquence. But all this is not enough to satisfy the severe and scrupulous spirit of the modern philosophy. Give us facts. Give us appearances. Shew us how, from the experience of a life or a century, you can draw a legitimate conclusion so boundless in its extent, and by which you propose to fix down both the processes of a remote antiquity, and the endless progressions either of nature or of providence in future ages. Are there any historical documents? Any memorials of the experience of past times? On a question of such magnitude, we would esteem the recorded observations of some remote age to be peculiarly valuable, and worth all the ingenuity and eloquence which a philosopher could bestow on the limited experience of one or two generations. A process of geology may take millions of years before it reaches its accomplishment. It is impossible that we can collect the law or the character of this pro-

cess from the experience of a single century, which does not furnish us one single step in this vast and immeasurable progression. We look as far as we can into a distant antiquity, and take hold with avidity of any authentic document, by which we can ascertain a single fact to guide and to enlighten us in this interesting speculation. The same caution is necessary in the subject before us. The administration of the Supreme Being is coeval with the first purposes of his uncreated mind, and it points to eternity. The life of man is but a point in that progress, to which we see no end, and can assign no beginning. We are not able to collect the law or the character of this administration from an experience so momentary. We therefore cast an eye on the history of past times. We examine every document which comes before us. We compare all the moral phenomena which can be collected from the narratives of antiquity. We seize with avidity every record of the manifestations of Providence, every fact which can enlighten the ways of God to man; and we would esteem it a deviation from the right spirit and temper of philosophical investigation, were we to suffer the crude or fanciful speculations of our own limited experience to take a precedency over the authentic informations of history.

But this is not all. Our experience is not only limited in point of time; it is also limited in point of extent. To assign the character of the divine administration from the little that offers itself to the notice of our own personal experience, would be far more absurd than to infer the history and character of the kingdom from the history and character of our own family. Vain is the attempt to convey in language what the most powerful imagination sinks under; how small the globe, and "all which it inherits," is in the immensity of creation! How humble a corner in the immeasurable fields of nature and of providence! If

the whole visible creation were to be swept away, we think of the dark and awful solitude which it would leave behind it in the unpeopled regions of space. But to a mind that could take in the whole, and throw a wide survey over the innumerable worlds which roll beyond the ken of the human eye, there would be no blank, and the universe of God would appear a scene as goodly and majestic as ever. Now it is the administration of this God that we sit in judgment upon; the counsels of Him, whose wisdom and energy are of a kind so inexplicable; whom no magnitude can overpower, whom no littleness can escape, whom no variety can bewilder; who gives vegetation to every blade of grass, and moves every particle of blood which circulates through the veins of the minutest animal; and all this by the same omnipotent arm that is abroad upon the universe, and presides in high authority over the destiny of all worlds.

It is impossible not to mingle the moral impressions of piety with such a contemplation. But suppose these impressions to be excluded, that the whole may be reduced to a matter of abstract and unfeeling intelligence. The question under consideration is, How far the experience of man can lead him to any certain conclusions, as to the character of the divine administration; If it does lead him to some certain conclusions, then, in the spirit of the Baconian philosophy, he will apply these conclusions to the information derived from other sources; and they will of course affect, or destroy, or confirm the credibility of that information. If, on the other hand, it appears that experience gives no light, no direction on the subject, then, in the very same spirit, he will submit his mind as a blank surface to all the positive information which comes to it from any other quarter. We take our lesson as it comes to us, provided we are satisfied beforehand, that it comes from a source which is authentic. We set up no pre-

sumptions of our own against the authority of the unquestionable evidence that we have met with, and reject all the suggestions which our defective experience can furnish, as the follies of a rash and fanciful speculation.

Now, let it be observed, that the great strength of the Christian argument lies in the historical evidence for the truth of the Gospel narrative. In discussing the light of this evidence, we walk by the light of experience. We assign the degree of weight that is due to the testimony of the first Christians upon the observed principles of human nature. We do not step beyond the cautious procedure of Lord Bacon's philosophy. We keep within the safe and certain limits of experimental truth. We believe the testimony of the apostles, because, from what we know of the human character, it is impossible that men in their circumstances could have persevered as they did in the assertion of a falsehood; it is impossible that they could have imposed this falsehood upon such a multitude of followers; it is impossible that they could have escaped detection, surrounded as they were by a host of enemies, so eager and so determined in their resentments. On this kind of argument we are quite at home. There is no theory, no assumption. We feel every inch of the ground we are treading upon. The degree of credit that should be annexed to the testimony of the apostles, is altogether a question of experience. Every principle which we apply towards the decision of this question is founded upon materials which lie before us, and are every day within the reach of observation. Our belief in the testimony of the apostles, is founded upon our experience of human nature and human affairs. In the whole process of the inquiry, we never wander from that sure, though humble path, which has been pointed out to us by the great master of philosophising. We never cast off the authority of those maxims, which have been found in every other de-

partment of knowledge to be sound and infallible. We never suffer assumption to take the precedency of observation, or abandon that safe and certain mode of investigation, which is the only one suited to the real mediocrity of our powers.

It appears to us, that the disciples of the infidel philosophy have reversed this process. They take a loftier flight. You seldom find them upon the ground of the historical evidence. It is not, in general, upon the weight, or the nature of human testimony, that they venture to pronounce on the credibility of the Christian revelation. It is on the character of that revelation itself. It is on what they conceive to be the absurdity of its doctrines. It is because they see something in the nature or dispensation of Christianity, which they think disparaging to the attributes of God, and not agreeable to that line of proceeding which the Almighty should observe in the government of his creatures. Rousseau expresses his astonishment at the strength of the historical testimony; so strong, that the inventor of the narrative appeared to him to be more miraculous than the hero. But the absurdities of this said revelation are sufficient in his mind to bear down the whole weight of its direct and external evidences. There was something in the doctrines of the New Testament repulsive to the taste and the imagination, and perhaps even to the convictions of this interesting enthusiast. He could not reconcile them with his pre-established conceptions of the divine character and mode of operation. To submit to these doctrines, he behoved to surrender that theism, which the powers of his ardent mind had wrought up into a most beautiful and delicious speculation. Such a sacrifice was not to be made. It was too painful. It would have taken away from him, what every mind of genius and sensibility esteems to be the highest of all lux-

uries. It would destroy a system, which had all that is fair and magnificent to recommend it, and mar the gracefulness of that fine intellectual picture, on which this wonderful man had bestowed all the embellishments of feeling, and fancy, and eloquence.

In as far, then, as we can judge of the conduct of man in given circumstances, we would pass a favourable sentence upon the testimony of the apostles. But, says the Deist, I judge of the conduct of God; and what the apostles tell me of him is so opposite to that judgment, that I discredit their testimony. The question at issue between us is, shall we admit the testimony of the apostles, upon the application of principles founded on observation, and as certain as is our experience of human affairs? Or, shall we reject that testimony upon the application of principles that are altogether beyond the range of observation, and as doubtful and imperfect in their nature, as is our experience of the counsels of heaven? In the first argument there is no assumption. We are competent to judge of the behaviour of man in given circumstances. This is a subject completely accessible to observation. The second argument is founded upon assumption entirely. We are not competent to judge of the conduct of the Almighty in given circumstances. Here we are precluded, by the nature of the subject, from the benefit of observation. There is no antecedent experience to guide or to enlighten us. It is not for man to assume what is right, or proper, or natural for the Almighty to do. It is not in the mere spirit of piety that we say so; it is in the spirit of the soundest experimental philosophy. The argument of the Christian is precisely what the maxims of Lord Bacon would dispose us to acquiesce in. The argument of the infidel is precisely that argument which the same maxims would dispose us to reject; and when put by the side of the Christian argument, it appears as crude and as un-

philosophical, as do the ingenious speculations of the schoolmen, when set in opposition to the rigour, and evidence, and precision, which reign in every department of modern science.

The application of Lord Bacon's philosophy to the study of external nature was a happy epoch in the history of physical science. It is not long since this application has been extended to the study of moral and intellectual phenomena. All that we contend for is, that our subject should have the benefit of the same application; and we count it hard while, in every other department of inquiry, a respect for truth is found sufficient to repress the appetite for system-building; that theology, the loftiest and most inaccessible of all the sciences, should still remain infected with a spirit so exploded, and so unphilosophical; and that the fancy, and theory, and unsupported speculation, so current among the Deists and demi-infidels of the day, should be held paramount to the authority of facts, which have come down to us with a weight of evidence and testimony, that is quite unexampled in the history of ancient times.

What is science, but a record of observed phenomena, grouped together according to certain points of resemblance, which have been suggested by an actual attention to the phenomena themselves? We never think of questioning the existence of the phenomena, after we have demonstrated the genuineness and authenticity of the record. After this is demonstrated, the singular or unexpected nature of the phenomena is not suffered to weaken their credibility,—a credibility which can only be destroyed by the authority of our own personal observation, or some other record possessed of equal or superior pretensions. But in none of the inductive sciences is it in the power of a student to verify every thing by his own personal observation. He must put up with the observations of others,

brought home to the convictions of his own mind by creditable testimony. In the science of geology, this is eminently the case. In a science of such extent, our principles must be in part founded upon the observations of others, transmitted to us from a distant country. And in a science, the processes of which are so lengthened in point of time, our principles should also in part be founded on the observations of others, transmitted to us from a remote antiquity. Any observations of our own are so limited, both in point of space and of time, that we never think of opposing their authority to the evidence which is laid before us. Our whole attention is directed to the validity of the record; and the moment that this validity is established, we hold it incumbent upon us to submit our minds to the entire and unmodified impression of the testimony contained in it. Now, all that we ask is, that the same process of investigation be observed in theology, which is held to be so sound and so legitimate in other sciences. In a science of such extent, as to embrace the wide domain of moral and intelligent nature, we feel the littleness of that range to which our own personal observations are confined. We shall be glad, not merely of the information transmitted to us from a distant country, but of the authentic information transmitted to us by any other order of beings, in some distant and unknown part of the creation. In a science, too, which has for its object the lengthened processes of the divine administration, we should like, if any record of past times could enable us to extend our observations beyond the limits of our own ephemeral experience; and if there are any events of a former age possessed of such a peculiar and decisive character, as would help us to some satisfactory conclusion in this greatest and most interesting of the sciences.

On a subject so much above us and beyond us, we would never think of opposing any preconceptions to the

evidence of history. We would maintain the humility of the inductive spirit. We would cast about for facts, and events, and appearances. We would offer our minds as a blank surface to every thing that came to them, supported by unexceptionable evidence. It is not upon the nature of the facts themselves, that we would pronounce upon their credibility, but upon the nature of that testimony by which they were supported. Our whole attention would be directed to the authority of the record. After this was established, we would surrender our whole understanding to its contents. We would school down every antipathy within us, and disown it as a childish affection, unworthy of a philosopher who professes to follow truth through all the disgusts and discouragements which surround it. There are men of splendid reputation in our enlightened circles, who never attended to this speculation, and who annex to the Gospel of Christ nothing else than ideas of superstition and vulgarity. In braving their contempt, we would feel ourselves in the best element for the display and exercise of the philosophical temper. We would rejoice in the omnipotence of truth, and anticipate, in triumph, the victory which it must accomplish over the pride of science, and the fastidiousness of literature. It would not be the enthusiasm of a visionary which would support us, but the inward working of the very same principle which sustained Galileo, when he adhered to the result of his experiments, and Newton, when he opposed his measurements and observations to the tide of prejudice he had to encounter from the prevailing taste and philosophy of the times.

We conceive, that inattention to the above principles has led many of the most popular and respected writers in the Deistical controversy to introduce a great deal of discussion that is foreign to the merits of the question altogether; and in this way the attention is often turned

away from the point in which the main strength of the argument lies. An infidel, for example, objects against one of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity. To repel the objection, the Christian conceives it necessary to vindicate the reasonableness of that doctrine, and to shew how consistent it is with all those antecedent conceptions which we derived from the light of natural religion. All this we count superfluous. It is imposing an unnecessary task upon ourselves. Enough for us to have established the authority of the Christian revelation upon the ground of its historical evidence. All that remains is to submit our minds to the fair interpretation of Scripture. Yes; but how do you dispose of the objection drawn from the light of natural religion? In precisely the same way that we would dispose of an objection drawn from some speculative system, against the truth of any physical fact that has been well established by observation or testimony. We would disown the system, and oppose the obstinacy of the fact to all the elegance and ingenuity of the speculation.

We are sensible that this is not enough to satisfy a numerous class of very sincere and well disposed Christians. There are many of this description, who, antecedent to the study of the Christian revelation altogether, repose a very strong confidence in the light of natural religion, and think that upon the mere strength of its evidence, they can often pronounce with a considerable degree of assurance on the character of the divine administration. To such as these, something more is necessary than the external evidences on which Christianity rests. You must reconcile the doctrines of Christianity with those previous conceptions which the light of nature has given them; and a great deal of elaborate argument is often expended in bringing about this accommodation. It is, of course, a work of greater difficulty, to convince this description of people, though in point of fact, this difficulty has been

overcome, in a way the most masterly and decisive, by one of the soundest and most philosophical of our theologians.

To another description of Christians, this attempt to reconcile the doctrines of Christianity with the light of natural religion is superfluous. Give them historical evidence for the truth of Christianity, and all that natural religion may have taught them will fly like so many visionary phantoms before the light of its overbearing authority. With them the argument is reduced to a narrower compass. Is the testimony of the apostles and first Christians sufficient to establish the credibility of the facts which are recorded in the New Testament? The question is made to rest exclusively on the character of this testimony, and the circumstances attending it, and no antecedent theology of their own is suffered to mingle with the investigation. If the historical evidence of Christianity is found to be conclusive, they conceive the investigation to be at an end; and that nothing remains on their part, but an act of unconditional submission to all its doctrines.

Though it might be proper, in the present state of opinion, to accomodate to both these cases, yet we profess ourselves to belong to the latter description of Christians. We hold by the total insufficiency of natural religion to pronounce upon the intrinsic merits of any revelation, and think that the authority of every revelation rests exclusively upon its external evidences, and upon such marks of honesty in the composition itself as would apply to any human performance. We rest this opinion, not upon any fanatical impression of the ignorance of man, or how sinful it is for a weak and guilty mortal to pronounce upon the counsels of heaven, and the laws of the divine administration. We disown this presumption, not merely because it is sinful, but because we conceive it to be unphilosophical, and precisely analogous to that theorising

a priori spirit, which the wisdom of Bacon has banished from all the schools of philosophy.

For the satisfaction of the first class, we refer them to that argument which has been prosecuted with so much ability and success by Bishop Butler, in his Analogy of Natural and Revealed Religion. It is not so much the object of this author to found any positive argument on the accordancy which subsists between the processes of the divine administration in nature, and the processes ascribed to God by revelation, as to repel the argument founded upon their supposed discordancy. To one of the second class, the argument of Bishop Butler is not called for; but as to one of the first class, we can conceive nothing more calculated to quiet his difficulties. He believes a God, and he must therefore believe the character and existence of God to be reconcileable with all that he observes in the events and phenomena around him. He questions the claims of the New Testament to be a revelation from heaven, because he conceives, that it ascribes a plan and an economy to the Supreme Being, which are unworthy of his character. We offer no positive solution of this difficulty. We profess ourselves to be too little acquainted with the character of God; and that in this little corner of his works, we see not far enough to offer any decision on the merits of a government, which embraces worlds, and reaches eternity. We think we do enough, if we give a sufficiency of external proof for the New Testament being a true and authentic message from heaven; and that therefore nothing remains for us, but to attend and to submit to it. But the argument of Bishop Butler enables us to do still more than this. It enables us to say, that the very thing objected against in Christianity exists in nature; and that therefore the same God who is the author of nature, may be the author of Christianity. We do not say that any positive evidence can be founded up-

on this analogy. But in as far as it goes to repel the objection, it is triumphant. A man has no right to retain his theism, if he rejects Christianity upon difficulties to which natural religion is equally liable. If Christianity tells us, that the guilt of a father has brought suffering and vice upon his posterity, it is what we see exemplified in a thousand instances among the families around us. If it tells us, that the innocent have suffered for the guilty, it is nothing more than what all history and all observation have made perfectly familiar to us. If it tells us of one portion of the human race being distinguished by the sovereign will of the Almighty for superior knowledge, or superior privileges, it only adds one inequality more to the many inequalities which we perceive every day in the gifts of nature, of fortune, and of providence. In short, without entering into all the details of that argument, which Butler has brought forward in a way so masterly and decisive, there is not a single impeachment which can be offered against the God of Christianity, that may not, if consistently proceeded upon, be offered against the God of Nature itself; if the one be unworthy of God, the other is equally so; and if in spite of these difficulties, you still retain the conviction, that there is a God of Nature, it is not fair or rational to suffer them to outweigh all that positive evidence and testimony, which have been adduced for proving that the same God is the God of Christianity also.

CHAP. IX.

ON THE WAY OF PROPOSING THE ARGUMENT TO ATHEISTICAL INFIDELS.

If Christianity be still resisted, it appears to us that the only consistent refuge is Atheism. The very same peculiarities in the dispensation of the Gospel, which lead the infidel to reject it as unworthy of God, go to prove, that nature is unworthy of him, and land us in the melancholy conclusion, that whatever theory can be offered as to the mysterious origin and existence of the things which be, they are not under the dominion of a supreme and intelligent mind. Nor do we look upon Atheism as a more hopeless species of infidelity than Deism, unless in so far as it proves a more stubborn disposition of the heart to resist every religious conviction. Viewed purely as an intellectual subject, we look upon the mind of an Atheist, as in a better state of preparation for the proofs of Christianity than the mind of a Deist. The one is a blank surface, on which evidence may make a fair impression, and where the finger of history may inscribe its credible and well-attested information. The other is occupied with pre-conceptions. It will not take what history offers to it. It puts itself into the same unphilosophical posture, in which the mind of a prejudiced Cartesian opposed its theory of the heavens to the demonstration and measurements of Newton. The theory of the Deist upon a subject, where truth is still more inaccessible, and specula-

tion still more presumptuous, sets him to resist the only safe and competent evidence that can be appealed to. What was originally the evidence of observation, and is now transformed into the evidence of testimony, comes down to us in a series of historical documents, the closest and most consistent that all antiquity can furnish. It is the unfortunate theory which forms the grand obstacle to the admission of the Christian miracles, and which leads the Deist to an exhibition of himself so unphilosophical, as that of trampling on the soundest laws of evidence, by bringing an historical fact under the tribunal of a theoretical principle. The deistical speculation of Rousseau, by which he neutralised the testimony of the first Christians, is as complete a transgression against the temper and principles of true science, as a category of Aristotle when employed to overrule an experiment in chemistry. But however this be, it is evident that Rousseau would have given a readier reception to the Gospel history, had his mind not been pre-occupied with the speculation; and the negative state of Atheism would have been more favourable to the admission of those facts, which are connected with the origin and establishment of our religion in the world.

This suggests the way in which the evidence for Christianity should be carried home to the mind of an Atheist. He sees nothing in the phenomena around him, that can warrant him to believe in the existence of a living and intelligent principle, which gave birth and movement to all things. He does not say that he would refuse credit to the existence of God upon sufficient evidence, but he says that there are not such appearances of design in nature, as to supply him with that evidence. He does not deny the existence of God to be a possible truth; but he affirms, that while there is nothing before him but the consciousness of what passes within, and the observation of what passes without, it remains an assertion destitute of proof,

and can have no more effect upon his conviction than any other nonentity of the imagination. There is a mighty difference between *not proven* and *disproven*. We see nothing in the argument of the Atheists which goes farther, than to establish the former sentence upon the question of God's existence. It is altogether an argument *ab ignorantia;* and the same ignorance which restrains them from asserting in positive terms that God exists, equally restrains them from asserting in positive terms that God does not exist. The assertion may be offered, that, in some distant regions of the creation, there are tracts of space which, instead of being occupied like the tracts around us with suns and planetary systems, teem only with animated beings, who, without being supported like us on the firm surface of a world, have the power of spontaneous movements in free spaces. We cannot say that the assertion is not true, but we can say that it is not proven. It carries in it no positive character either of truth or falsehood, and may therefore be admitted on appropriate and satisfying evidence. But till that evidence comes, the mind is in a state entirely neutral; and such we conceive to be the neutral state of the Atheist, as to what he holds to be the unproved assertion of the existence of God.

To the neutral mind of the Atheist, then, unfurnished as it is with any previous conception, we offer the historical evidence of christianity. We do not ask him to presume the existence of God. We ask him to examine the miracles of the New Testament merely as recorded events, and to admit no other principle into the investigation, than those which are held to be satisfying and decisive, on any other subject of written testimony. The sweeping principle upon which Rousseau, filled with his own assumptions, condemned the historical evidence for the truth of the Gospel narrative, can have no influence on the blank and unoccupied mind of an Atheist. He has no presumptions

upon the subject; for to his eye the phenomena of nature sit so loose and unconnected with that intelligent Being, to whom they have been referred as their origin, that he does not feel himself entitled, from these phenomena, to ascribe any existence, any character, any attributes, or any method of administration to such a Being. He is therefore in the best possible condition for submitting his understanding to the entire impression of the historical evidence. Those difficulties which perplex the Deist, who cannot recognize in the God of the New Testament the same features and the same principles in which they have invested the God of nature, are no difficulties to him. He has no God of nature to confront with that real though invisible power which lay at the bottom of those astonishing miracles, on which history has stamped her most authentic characters. Though the power which presided there should be an arbitrary, an unjust, or a malignant being, all this may startle a Deist, but it will not prevent a consistent Atheist from acquiescing in any legitimate inference, to which the miracles of the Gospel, viewed in the simple light of historical facts, may chance to carry him. He cannot bring his antecedent information into play upon this question. He professes to have no antecedent information on the subject; and this sense of his entire ignorance, which lies at the bottom of his Atheism, would expunge from his mind all that is theoretical, and make it the passive recipient of every thing which observation offers to its notice, or which credible testimony has brought down to it of the history of past ages.

What then, we ask, does the Atheist make of the miracles of the New Testament? If he questions their truth, he must do it upon grounds that are purely historical. He is precluded from every other ground by the very principle on which he has rested his Atheism; and we therefore, upon the strength of that testimony which

has been already exhibited, press the admission of these miracles as facts. If there be nothing then, in the ordinary phenomena of nature, to infer a God, do these extraordinary phenomena supply him with no argument? Does a voice from heaven make no impression upon him? And we have the best evidence which history can furnish, that such a voice was uttered; "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." We have the evidence of a fact, for the existence of that very Being from whom the voice proceeded, and the evidence of a thousand facts, for a power superior to nature; because, on the impulse of a volition, it counteracted her laws and processes, it allayed the wind, it gave sight to the blind, health to the diseased, and, at the utterance of a voice, it gave life to the dead. The ostensible agent in all these wonderful proceedings gave not only credentials of his power, but he gave such credentials of his honesty, as dispose our understanding to receive his explanation of them. We do not avail ourselves of any other principle than what an Atheist will acknowledge. He understands as well as we do, the natural signs of veracity, which lie in the tone, the manner, the countenance, the high moral expression of worth and benevolence, and, above all, in that firm and undaunted constancy, which neither contempt, nor poverty, nor death, could shift from any of its positions. All these claims upon our belief, were accumulated to an unexampled degree in the person of Jesus of Nazareth; and when we couple with them his undoubted miracles, and the manner in which his own personal appearance was followed up by a host of witnesses, who, after a catastrophe which would have proved a death-blow to any cause of imposture, offered themselves to the eye of the public, with the same powers, the same evidence, and the same testimony, it seems impossible to resist his account of the invisible principle, which gave birth and

movement to the whole of this wonderful transaction. Whatever Atheism we may have founded on the common phenomena around us, here is a new phenomenon which demands our attention,—the testimony of a man, who, in addition to evidences of honesty, more varied and more satisfying than were ever offered by a brother of the species, had a voice from the clouds, and the power of working miracles, to vouch for him. We do not think, that the account which this man gives of himself can be viewed either with indifference or distrust, and the account is most satisfying. "I proceeded forth, and came from God."—"He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God."—"Even as the Father said unto me so I speak." He had elsewhere said, that God was his Father. The existence of God is here laid before us, by an evidence altogether distinct from the natural argument of the schools; and it may therefore be admitted in spite of the deficiency of that argument. From the same pure and unquestionable source we gather our information of his attributes. "God is true."—"God is a spirit." He is omnipotent, "for with God all things are possible." He is intelligent, "for he knoweth what things we have need of." He sees all things, and he directs all things, "for the very hairs of our head are numbered," and "a sparrow falleth not to the ground without his permission."

The evidences of the christian religion are suited to every species of infidelity. We do not ask the Atheist to furnish himself with any previous conception. We ask him to come as he is; and, upon the strength of his own favourite principle, viewing it as a pure intellectual question, and abstracting from the more unmanageable tendencies of the heart and temper, we conceive his understanding to be in a high state of preparation, for taking in Christianity in a far purer and more scriptural form, than can be expected from those whose minds are tainted and pre-occupied with their former speculations.

CHAP. X.

ON THE SUPREME AUTHORITY OF REVELATION.

If the New Testament be a message from God, it behoves us to make an entire and unconditional surrender of our minds, to all the duty and to all the information which it sets before us.

There is, perhaps, nothing more thoroughly beyond the cognizance of the human faculties, than the truths of religion, and the ways of that mighty and invisible Being who is the object of it; and yet nothing, we will venture to say, has been made the subject of more hardy and adventurous speculation. We make no allusion at present to Deists, who reject the authority of the New Testament, because the plan and the dispensation of the Almighty, which is recorded there, is different from that plan and that dispensation which they have chosen to ascribe to him. We speak of Christians, who profess to admit the authority of this record, but who have tainted the purity of their profession by not acting upon its exclusive authority; who have mingled their own thoughts and their own fancy with its information; who, instead of repairing in every question, and in every difficulty, to the principle of "What readest thou," have abridged the sovereignty of this principle, by appealing to others, of which we undertake to make out the incompetency; who, in addition to the word of God, talk also of the reason of the thing, or

the standard of orthodoxy; and have in fact brought down the Bible from the high place which belongs to it, as the only tribunal to which the appeal should be made, or from which the decision should be looked for.

But it is not merely among partizans or the advocates of a system, that we meet with this indifference to the authority of what is written. It lies at the bottom of a great deal of that looseness, both in practice and speculation, which we meet with every day in society, and which we often hear expressed in familiar conversation. Whence that list of maxims which are so indolently conceived, but which, at the same time, are so faithfully proceeded upon? "We have all our passions and infirmities; but we have honest hearts, and that will make up for them. Men are not all cast in the same mould. God will not call us to task too rigidly for our foibles; at least this is our opinion, and God can never be so unmerciful, or so unjust, as to bring us to a severe and unforgiving tribunal for the mistakes of the understanding." Now it is not licentiousness in general, which we are speaking against. It is against that sanction which it appears to derive from the self-formed maxims of him who is guilty of it. It is against the principle, that either an error of doctrine, or an indulgence of passion, is to be exempted from condemnation, because it has an opinion of the mind to give it countenance and authority. What we complain of is, that a man no sooner sets himself forward and says, "this is my sentiment," than he conceives that all culpability is taken away from the error, either of practice or speculation, into which he has fallen. The carelessness with which the opinion has been formed, is of no account in the estimate. It is the mere existence of the opinion, which is pleaded in vindication, and under the authority of *our maxim*, and *our mode of thinking*, every man conceives himself to have a right to his own way and his own peculiarity.

Now this might be all very fair, were there no Bible and no revelation in existence. But it is not fair, that all this looseness, and all this variety, should be still floating in the world, in the face of an authoritative communication from God himself. Had no message come to us from the Fountain-head of truth, it were natural enough for every individual mind to betake itself to its own speculation. But a message has come to us, bearing on its forehead every character of authenticity; and is it right now, that the question of our faith, or of our duty, should be committed to the capricious variations of this man's taste, or of that man's fancy? Our maxim, and our sentiment! God has put an authoritative stop to all this. He has spoken, and the right or the liberty of speculation no longer remains to us. The question now is, not "What thinkest thou?" In the days of Pagan antiquity, no other question could be put; and to the wretched delusions and idolatries of that period let us see what kind of answer the human mind is capable of making, when left to its own guidance, and its own authority. But we call ourselves Christians, and profess to receive the Bible as the directory of our faith; and the only question in which we are concerned, is, "What is written in the law? how readest thou?"

But there is a way of escaping from this conclusion. No man calling himself a Christian, will ever disown in words the authority of the Bible. Whatever be counted the genuine interpretation, it must be submitted to. But in the act of coming to this interpretation, it will be observed, there is room for the unwarrantable principles which we are attempting to expose. The business of a scripture critic is to give a fair representation of the sense of all its passages as they exist in the original. Now, this is a process which requires some investigation, and it is during the time that this process is carrying on, that the

tendencies and antecedent opinions of the mind are suffered to mislead the inquirer from the true principles of the business in which he is employed. The mind and meaning of the author, who is translated, is purely a question of language, and should be decided upon no other principles than those of grammar or philology. Now, what we complain of is, that while this principle is recognized and acted upon in every other composition which has come down to us from antiquity, it has been most glaringly departed from in the case of the Bible; that the meaning of its author, instead of being made singly and entirely a question of grammar, has been made a question of metaphysics, or a question of sentiment; that instead of the argument resorted to being, "such must be the rendering from the structure of the language, and the import and significancy of its phrases," it has been, "such must be the rendering from the analogy of the faith, the reason of the thing, the character of the Divine mind, and the wisdom of all his dispensations." And whether this argument be formally insisted upon or not, we have still to complain, that in reality it has a most decided influence on the understanding of many a Christian; and in this way, the creed which exists in his mind, instead of being a fair transcript of the New Testament, is the result of a compromise which has been made between its authoritative decisions and the speculations of his own fancy.

What is the reason why there is so much more unanimity among critics and grammarians about the sense of any ancient author, than about the sense of the New Testament? Because the one is made purely a question of criticism: The other has been complicated with the uncertain fancies of a daring and presumptuous theology. Could we only dismiss these fancies, sit down like a school-boy to his task, and look upon the study of divinity as a mere work of translation, then we would expect

the same unanimity among Christians that we meet with among scholars and literati, about the system of Epicurus or the philosophy of Aristotle. But here lies the distinction between the two cases. When we make out, by a critical examination of the Greek of Aristotle, that such was his meaning, and such his philosophy, the result carries no authority with it, and our mind retains the congenial liberty of its own speculations. But if we make out by a critical examination of the Greek of St. Paul, that such is the theology of the New Testament, we are bound to submit to this theology; and our minds must surrender every opinion, however dear to it. It is quite in vain to talk of the mysteriousness of the subject, as being the cause of the want of unanimity among Christians. It may be mysterious, in reference to our former conceptions. It may be mysterious in the utter impossibility of reconciling it with our own assumed fancies, and self-formed principles. It may be mysterious in the difficulty which we feel in comprehending the manner of the doctrine, when we ought to be satisfied with the authoritative revelation which has been made to us of its existence and its truth. But if we could only abandon all our former conceptions, if we felt that our business was to submit to the oracles of God, and that we are not called upon to effect a reconciliation between a revealed doctrine of the Bible, and an assumed or excogitated principle of our own;—then we are satisfied, that we would find the language of the Testament to have as much clear, and precise, and didactic simplicity, as the language of any sage or philosopher that has come down to us.

Could we only get it reduced to a mere question of language, we should look at no distant period for the establishment of a pure and unanimous Christianity in the world. But, no. While the mind and the meaning of any philosopher is collected from his words, and these

words tried, as to their import and significancy, upon the appropriate principles of criticism, the mind and the meaning of the Spirit of God is not collected upon the same pure and competent principles of investigation. In order to know the mind of the Spirit, the communications of the Spirit, and the expression of these communications in written language, should be consulted. These are the only data upon which the inquiry should be instituted. But, no. Instead of learning the designs and character of the Almighty from his own mouth, we sit in judgment upon them; and make our conjecture of what they should be, take the precedency of his revelation of what they are. We do him the same injustice that we do to an acquaintance, whose proceedings and whose intentions we venture to pronounce upon, while we refuse him a hearing, or turn away from the letter in which he explains himself. No wonder, then, at the want of unanimity among Christians, so long as the question of "What thinkest thou?" is made the principle of their creed, and, for the safe guidance of criticism, they have committed themselves to the endless caprices of the human intellect. Let the principle of "what thinkest thou" be exploded, and that of "what readest thou" be substituted in its place. Let us take our lesson as the Almighty places it before us, and, instead of being the judge of his conduct, be satisfied with the safer and humbler office of being the interpreter of his language.

Now this principle is not exclusively applicable to the learned. The great bulk of Christians have no access to the Bible in its original languages; but they have access to the common translation, and they may be satisfied by the concurrent testimony of the learned among the different sectaries of this country, that the translation is a good one. We do not confine the principle to critics and translators; we press it upon all. We call upon them not to

form their divinity by independent thinking, but to receive it by obedient reading, to take the words as they stand, and submit to the plain English of the Scriptures which lie before them. It is the office of a translator to give a faithful representation of the original. Now that this faithful representation has been given, it is our part to peruse it with care and to take a fair and a faithful impression of it. It is our part to purify our understanding of all its previous conceptions. We must bring a free and unoccupied mind to the exercise. It must not be the pride or the obstinacy of self-formed opinions, or the haughty independence of him who thinks he has reached the manhood of his understanding. We must bring with us the docility of a child, if we want to gain the kingdom of heaven. It must not be a partial, but an entire and unexcepted obedience. There must be no garbling of that which is entire, no darkening of that which is luminous, no softening down of that which is authoritative or severe. The Bible will allow of no compromise. It professes to be the directory of our faith, and claims a total ascendency over the souls and the understandings of men. It will enter into no composition with us, or our natural principles. It challenges the whole mind as its due, and it appeals to the truth of heaven for the high authority of its sanctions. "Whosoever addeth to, or taketh from, the words of this book, is accursed," is the absolute language in which it delivers itself. This brings us to its terms. There is no way of escaping after this. We must bring every thought into the captivity of its obedience, and as closely as ever lawyer stuck to his document or his extract, must we abide by the rule and the doctrine which this authentic memorial of God sets before us.

Now we hazard the assertion, that, with a number of professing Christians, there is not this unexcepted submission of the understanding to the authority of the Bible;

and that the authority of the Bible is often modified, and in some cases superseded by the authority of other principles. One of these principles is the reason of the thing. We do not know if this principle would be at all felt or appealed to by the earliest Christians. It may perhaps by the disputatious or the philosophising among converted Jews and Greeks, but not certainly by those of whom Paul said, that "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, were called." They turned from dumb idols to serve the living and the true God. There was nothing in their antecedent theology which they could have any respect for: Nothing which they could confront, or bring into competition with the doctrines of the New Testament. In those days, the truth as it is in Jesus came to the mind of its disciples, recommended by its novelty, by its grandeur, by the power and recency of its evidences, and above all by its vast and evident superiority over the fooleries of a degrading Paganism. It does not occur to us, that men in these circumstances would ever think of sitting in judgment over the mysteries of that sublime faith which had charmed them into an abandonment of their earlier religion. It rather strikes us, that they would receive them passively; that, like scholars who had all to learn, they would take their lesson as they found it; that the information of their teachers would be enough for them; and that the restless tendency of the human mind to speculation, would for a time find ample enjoyment in the rich and splendid discoveries, which broke like a flood of light upon the world. But we are in different circumstances. To us, these discoveries, rich and splendid as they are, have lost the freshness of novelty. The sun of righteousness, like the sun in the firmament, has become familiarised to us by possession. In a few ages, the human mind deserted its guidance, and rambled as much as ever in quest of new spec-

ulations. It is true, that they took a juster and loftier flight since the days of Heathenism. But it was only because they walked in the light of revelation. They borrowed of the New Testament without acknowledgment, and took its beauties and its truths to deck their own wretched fancies and self-constituted systems. In the process of time, the delusion multiplied and extended. Schools were formed, and the ways of the Divinity were as confidently theorized upon, as the processes of chemistry, or the economy of the heavens. Universities were endowed, and natural theology took its place in the circle of the sciences. Folios were written, and the respected luminaries of a former age poured their *à priori* and their *á posteriori* demonstrations on the world. Taste, and sentiment, and imagination, grew apace; and every raw untutored principle which poetry could clothe in prettiness, or over which the hand of genius could throw the graces of sensibility and elegance, was erected into a principle of the divine government, and made to preside over the counsels of the Deity. In the mean time, the Bible which ought to supersede all, was itself superseded. It was quite in vain to say that it was the only authentic record of an actual embassy which God had sent into the world. It was quite in vain to plead its testimonies, its miracles, and the unquestionable fulfilment of its prophecies. These mighty claims must lie over, and be suspended, till we have settled—what? the reasonableness of its doctrines. We must bring the theology of God's ambassador to the bar of our self-formed theology. The Bible, instead of being admitted as the directory of our faith upon its external evidences, must be tried upon the merits of the work itself; and if our verdict be favourable, it must be brought in, not as a help to our ignorance, but as a corollary to our demonstrations. But is this ever done? Yes! by Dr. Samuel Clarke, and a whole host of followers and

admirers. Their first step in the process of theological study, is to furnish their minds with the principles of natural theology. Christianity, before its external proofs are looked at or listened to, must be brought under the tribunal of these principles. All the difficulties which attach to the reason of the thing, or the fitness of the doctrines, must be formally discussed, and satisfactorily got over. A voice was heard from heaven, saying of Jesus Christ, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him." The men of Galilee saw him ascend from the dead to the heaven which he now occupies. The men of Galilee gave their testimony; and it is a testimony which stood the fiery trial of persecution in a former age, and of sophistry in this. And yet, instead of hearing Jesus Christ as disciples, they sit in authority over him as judges. Instead of forming their divinity after the Bible, they try the Bible by their antecedent divinity; and this book, with all its mighty train of evidences, must drivel in their antichambers, till they have pronounced sentence of admission, when they have got its doctrines to agree with their own airy and unsubstantial speculations.

We do not condemn the exercise of reason in matters of theology. It is the part of reason to form its conclusions, when it has data and evidences before it. But it is equally the part of reason to abstain from its conclusions, when these evidences are wanting. Reason can judge of the external evidences for Christianity, because it can discern the merits of human testimony: and it can perceive the truth or the falsehood of such obvious credentials as the performance of a miracle, or the fulfilment of a prophecy. But reason is not entitled to sit in judgment over those internal evidences, which many a presumptuous theologian has attempted to derive from the reason of the thing, or from the agreement of the doctrine with the fancied character and attributes of the Deity. One of the most

useful exercises of reason, is to ascertain its limits, and to keep within them; to abandon the field of conjecture, and to restrain itself within that safe and certain barrier which forms the boundary of human experience. However humiliating you may conceive it, it is this which lies at the bottom of Lord Bacon's philosophy, and it is to this that modern science is indebted for all her solidity, and all her triumphs. Why does philosophy flourish in our days? Because her votaries have learned to abandon their own creative speculations, and to submit to evidence, let her conclusions be as painful and as unpalatable as they will. Now all that we want, is to carry the same lesson and the same principle into theology. Our business is not to guess, but to learn. After we have established Christianity to be an authentic message from God upon those historical grounds, on which the reason and experience of man entitle him to form his conclusions,—nothing remains for us, but an unconditional surrender of the mind to the subject of the message. We have a right to sit in judgment over the credentials of heaven's ambassador, but we have no right to sit in judgment over the information he gives us. We have no right either to refuse or to modify that information, till we have accommodated it to our previous conceptions. It is very true that if the truths which he delivered lay within the field of human observation, he brings himself under the tribunal of our antecedent knowledge. Were he to tell us, that the bodies of the planetary system moved in orbits which are purely circular, we would oppose to him the observations and measurements of astronomy. Were he to tell us, that in winter the sun never shone, and that in summer no cloud ever darkened the brilliancy of his career, we would oppose to him the certain remembrances, both of ourselves and of our whole neighbourhood. Were he to tell us, that we were perfect men, because we were

free from passion, and loved our neighbours as ourselves, we would oppose to him the history of our own lives, and the deeply-seated consciousness of our own infirmities. On all these subjects, we can confront him: but when he brings truth from a quarter which no human eye ever explored; when he tells us the mind of the Deity, and brings before us the counsels of that invisible Being, whose arm is abroad upon all worlds, and whose views reach to eternity, he is beyond the ken of eye or of telescope, and we must submit to him. We have no more right to sit in judgment over his information, than we have to sit in judgment over the information of any other visitor who lights upon our planet, from some distant and unknown part of the universe, and tells us what worlds roll in those remote tracts which are beyond the limits of our astronomy, and how the Divinity peoples them with his wonders. Any previous conceptions of ours are of no more value than the fooleries of an infant; and should we offer to resist or to modify upon the strength of these conceptions, we would be as unsound and as unphilosophical as ever schoolman was with his categories, or Cartesian with his whirlpools of ether.

Let us go back to the first Christians of the Gentile world. They turned from dumb idols to serve the living and the true God. They made a simple and entire transition from a state as bad, if not worse, than that of entire ignorance, to the Christianity of the New Testament. Their previous conceptions, instead of helping them, behoved to be utterly abandoned; nor was there that intermediate step which so many of us think to be necessary, and which we dignify with the name of the rational theology of nature. In those days, this rational theology was unheard of; nor have we the slightest reason to believe that they were ever initiated into its doctrines, before they were looked upon as fit to be taught the peculiarities of

the Gospel. They were translated at once from the absurdities of Paganism to that Christianity which has come down to us, in the records of the evangelical history, and the epistles which their teachers addressed to them. They saw the miracles; they acquiesced in them, as satisfying credentials of an inspired teacher; they took the whole of their religion from his mouth; their faith came by hearing, and hearing by the words of a divine messenger. This was their process, and it ought to be ours. We do not see the miracles, but we see their reality through the medium of that clear and unsuspicious testimony which has been handed down to us. We should admit them as the credentials of an embassy from God. We should take the whole of our religion from the records of this embassy; and, renouncing the idolatry of our own self-formed conceptions, we should repair to that word, which was spoken to them that heard it, and transmitted to us by the instrumentality of written language. The question with them was, What hearest thou? The question with us is, what readest thou? They had their idols, and they turned away from them. We have our fancies, and we contend, that, in the face of an authoritative revelation from heaven, it is as glaring idolatry in us to adhere to them, as it would be were they spread out upon canvass, or chiselled into material form by the hands of a statuary.

In the popular religions of antiquity, we see scarcely the vestige of a resemblance to that academical theism which is delivered in our schools, and figures away in the speculations of our moralists. The process of conversion among the first Christians was a very simple one. It consisted of an utter abandonment of their heathenism, and an entire submission to those new truths which came to them through the revelation of the Gospel, and through it only. It was the pure theology of Christ and of his

apostles. That theology which struts in fancied demonstration from a professor's chair, formed no part of it. They listened as if they had all to learn: we listen as if it was our office to judge, and to give the message of God its due place and subordination among the principles which we had previously established. Now these principles were utterly unknown at the first publication of Christianity. The Galatians, and Corinthians, and Thessalonians, and Philippians, had no conception of them. And yet, will any man say, that either Paul himself, or those who lived under his immediate tuition, had not enough to make them accomplished Christians, or that they fell short of our enlightened selves, in the wisdom which prepares for eternity, because they wanted our rational theology as a stepping-stone to that knowledge which came, in pure and immediate revelation, from the Son of God? The Gospel was enough for them, and it should be enough for us also. Every natural or assumed principle, which offers to abridge its supremacy, or even so much as to share with it in authority and direction, should be instantly discarded. Every opinion in religion should be reduced to the question of, What readest thou? and the Bible be acquiesced in, and submitted to, as the alone directory of our faith, where we can get the whole will of God for the salvation of man.

But is not this an enlightened age? and, since the days of the Gospel, has not the wisdom of two thousand years accumulated upon the present generation? has not science been enriched by discovery? and is not theology one of the sciences? Are the men of this advanced period to be restrained from the high exercise of their powers? and, because the men of a remote and barbarous antiquity lisped and drivelled in the infancy of their acquirements, is that any reason why we should be restricted like so many schoolboys to the lesson that is set before

us? It is all true that this is a very enlightened age; but on what field has it acquired so flattering a distinction? On the field of experiment. The human mind owes all its progress to the confinement of its efforts within the safe and certain limits of observation, and to the severe restraint which it has imposed upon its speculative tendencies. Go beyond these limits, and the human mind has not advanced a single inch by its own independent exercises. All the philosophy which has been reared by the labour of successive ages, is the philosophy of facts reduced to general laws, or brought under a general description from observed points of resemblance. A proud and wonderful fabric we do allow; but we throw away the very instrument by which it was built, the moment that we cease to observe, and begin to theorize and excogitate. Tell us a single discovery, which has thrown a particle of light on the details of the divine administration. Tell us a single truth in the whole field of experimental science, which can bring us to the moral government of the Almighty by any other road than his own revelation. Astronomy has taken millions of suns and of systems within its ample domain; but the ways of God to man stand at a distance as inaccessible as ever; nor has it shed so much as a glimmering over the counsels of that mighty and invisible Being, who sits in high authority over all worlds. The boasted discoveries of modern science are all confined to that field, within which the senses of man can expatiate. The moment we go beyond this field, they cease to be discoveries, and are the mere speculations of the fancy. The discoveries of modern science have, in fact, imparted a new energy to the sentiment in question. They all serve to exalt the Deity, but they do not contribute a single iota to the explanation of his purposes. They make him greater, but they do not make him more comprehensible. He is more shrouded in

mystery than ever. It is not himself whom we see, it is his workmanship; and every new addition to its grandeur or to its variety, which philosophy opens to our contemplation, throws our understanding at a greater distance than before, from the mind and conception of the sublime Architect. Instead of the God of a single world, we now see him presiding in all the majesty of his high attributes, over a mighty range of innumerable systems. To our little eye he is wrapt in more awful mysteriousness, and every new glimpse which astronomy gives us of the universe, magnifies, to the apprehension of our mind, that impassable barrier which stands between the counsels of its Sovereign, and those fugitive beings who strut their evanescent hour in the humblest of its mansions. If this invisible Being would only break that mysterious silence in which he has wrapt himself, we feel that a single word from his mouth, would be worth a world of darkling speculations. Every new triumph which the mind of man achieves in the field of discovery, binds us more firmly to our Bible; and by the very proportion in which philosophy multiplies the wonders of God, do we prize that book, on which the evidence of history has stamped the character of his authentic communication.

The course of the moon in the heavens has exercised astronomers for a long series of ages, and now that they are able to assign all the irregularities of its period, it may be counted one of the most signal triumphs of the modern philosophy. The question lay within the limits of the field of observation. It was accessible to measurement, and, upon the sure principles of calculation, men of science have brought forward the confident solution of a problem, the most difficult and trying that ever was submitted to the human intellect. But let it never be forgotten, that those very maxims of philosophy which guided them so surely and so triumphantly within the field of

observation, also restrained them from stepping beyond it; and though none were more confident than they whenever they had evidence and experiment to enlighten them, yet none were more scrupulous in abstaining to pronounce upon any subject, where evidence and experiment were wanting. Let us suppose that one of their number, flushed with the triumph of success, passed on from the work of calculating the periods of the moon, to theorise upon its chemical constitution. The former question lies within the field of observation, the other is most thoroughly beyond it; and there is not a man, whose mind is disciplined to the rigour and sobriety of modern science, that would not look upon the theory with the same contempt, as if it were the dream of a poet, or the amusement of a schoolboy. We have heard much of the moon, and of the volcanoes which blaze upon its surface. Let us have incontestible evidence, that a falling stone proceeds from the eruption of one of these volcanoes, and the chemistry of the moon will receive more illustration from the analysis of that stone, than from all the speculations of all the theorists. It brings the question in part within the limits of observation. It now becomes a fair subject for the exercise of the true philosophy. The eye can now see, and the hand can now handle it; and the information furnished by the laborious drudgery of experimental men, will be received as a truer document, than the theory of any philosopher, however ingenious, or however splendid.

At the hazard of being counted fanciful, we bring forward the above as a competent illustration of the principle which we are attempting to establish. We do all homage to modern science, nor do we dispute the loftiness of its pretensions. But we maintain, that however brilliant its career in those tracts of philosophy, where it has the light of observation to conduct it, the philoso-

phy of all that lies without the field of observation is as obscure and inaccessible as ever. We maintain, that to pass from the motions of the moon to an unauthorised speculation upon the chemistry of its materials, is a presumption disowned by philosophy. We ought to feel, that it would be a still more glaring transgression of all her maxims, to pass from the brightest discovery in her catalogue, to the ways of that mysterious Being, whom no eye hath seen, and whose mind is capacious as infinity. The splendour and the magnitude of what we do know, can never authorise us to pronounce upon what we do not know; nor can we conceive a transition more violent or more unwarrantable, than to pass from the truths of natural science to a speculation on the details of God's administration, or the economy of his moral government. We hear much of revelations from heaven. Let any one of these bear the evidence of an actual communication from God himself, and all the reasonings of all the theologians must vanish, and give place to the substance of this communication. Instead of theorising upon the nature and properties of that divine light which irradiates the throne of God, and exists at so immeasurable a distance from our faculties, let us point our eyes to that emanation, which has actually come down to us. Instead of theorising upon the counsels of the divine mind, let us go to that volume which lighted upon our world nearly two thousand years ago, and which bears the most authentic evidence, that it is the depository of part of these counsels. Let us apply the proper instrument to this examination. Let us never conceive it to be a work of speculation or fancy. It is a pure work of grammatical analysis. It is an unmixed question of language. The commentator who opens this book with the one hand and carries his system in the other, has nothing to do with it. We admit of no other instrument than the vocabulary and

the lexicon. The man whom we look to is the scripture critic, who can appeal to his authorities for the import and significancy of phrases, and whatever be the strict result of his patient and profound philology, we submit to it. We call upon every enlightened disciple of Lord Bacon to approve the steps of this process, and to acknowledge, that the same habits of philosophising to which science is indebted for all her elevation in these latter days, will lead us to cast down all our lofty imaginations, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

But something more remains to be done. The mind may have discernment enough to acquiesce in the speculative justness of a principle; but it may not have vigour or consistency enough to put it into execution. Lord Bacon pointed out the method of true philosophising; yet, in practice, he abandoned it, and his own physical investigations may be ranked among the most effectual specimens of that rash and unfounded theorising, which his own principles have banished from the schools of philosophy. Sir Isaac Newton completed in his own person the character of the true philosopher. He not only saw the general principle, but he obeyed it. He both betook himself to the drudgery of observation, and he endured the pain which every mind must suffer in the act of renouncing its old habits of conception. We call upon our readers to have manhood and philosophy enough to make a similar sacrifice. It is not enough that the Bible be acknowledged as the only authentic source of information respecting the details of that moral economy, which the Supreme Being has instituted for the government of the intelligent beings who occupy this globe. Its authenticity must be something more than acknowledged. It must be felt, and, in act and obedience, submitted to. Let us put them to the test. "Verily I say unto you," says our

Saviour, "unless a man shall be born again, he shall not enter into the kingdom of God." "By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." "Justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." We need not multiply quotations; but if there be any repugnance to the obvious truths which we have announced to the reader in the language of the Bible, his mind is not yet tutored to the philosophy of the subject. It may be in the way, but the final result is not yet arrived at. It is still a slave to the elegance or the plausibility of its old speculations; and though it admits the principle, that every previous opinion must give way to the supreme authority of an actual communication from God, it wants consistency and hardihood to carry the principle into accomplishment.

FINIS.

Chalmers, Thomas
Discourses on the Christian revelation viewed in connexion with the modern astronomy.

Bound with: The evidence and authority of the Christian revelation.

RF25.4
C353